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WINGENUND,

THE YOUNG TRAIL-HUNTER,

OR,

THE DEATH OF WAR-EAGLE.

A SEQUEL TO "THE WHITE BRAVE"

BY CAPTAIN MURRAY.

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WINGENUND, THE RED TRAIL-HUNTER.

CHAPTER I.

A DESERTED VILLAGE.

WE are on the spot where the Delaware village was. What a change has a few days produced! The lodges of the chiefs, with the poles bearing their shields and trophies; the white tent of Forest-Bird; the busy crowds of women and children; the troops of horses, the songs and dances of the warriors—all are gone! and in their stead nothing is to be seen but a flock of buzzards, gorging themselves on a meal too revolting to be described, and a pack of wolves snarling and quarreling over the remains of the unfortunate Lenape victims.

On the very spot where the tent of Olitipa had been pitched and where the marks of the tent-poles were still easily recognized, stood a solitary Indian, in an attitude of deep musing; his ornamented hunting-shirt and leggings proclaimed his chieftain rank; the rifle on which he leaned was of the newest and best workmanship, and his whole appearance was singularly striking; but the countenance was that which would have riveted the attention of a spectator, had any been there to look upon it, for it blended in its gentle yet proud lineaments a delicate beauty almost feminine, with a high heroic sternness, that one could scarcely have thought it possible to find in a youth only just emerging from boyhood; there was, too, a deep, silent expression of grief, rendered yet more touching by the fortitude with which it was controlled and repressed. Drear and desolate as was the scene around, the desolation of that young heart was yet greater; father, brother, friend! the beloved sister, the affectionate instructor; worst of all, the

tribe, the ancient people of whose chiefs he was the youngest and last surviving scion, all swept away at "one fell swoop!" And yet no tear fell from his eye, no murmur escaped his lip, and the energies of that heroic though youthful spirit rose above the tempest, whose fearful ravages he now contemplated with stern and gloomy resolution.

In this sketch the reader will recognize Wingenund, who had been absent on a course of watching and fasting, according to the usages of his nation. Had he been in the camp when the attack of the Osages was made, there is little doubt that his last drop of blood would have there been shed before the lodge of Tamenund; but he had retired to a distance, whence the war-cry and the tumult of the fight never reached his ear, and had concluded his self-denying probation with a dream of happy omen—a dream that promised futures glory, dear to every ambitious Indian spirit, and in which the triumphs of war were wildly and confusedly blended with the sisterly tones of Olitipa's voice, and the sweet smile of the Lily of Mooshanne.

Inspired by his vision, the ardent boy returned in high hope and spirits toward the encampment; but when he gained the summit of a hill which overlooked it, a single glance sufficed to show him the destruction that had been wrought during his absence; he saw that the lodges were overthrown, the horses driven off, and the inhabitants of the moving village either dispersed or destroyed. Rooted to the spot, he looked on the scene in speechless horror, when all at once his attention was caught by a body of men moving over a distant height in the western horizon, their figure being rendered visible by the deep red background afforded by the setting sun: swift as thought the youth darted off in pursuit.

After the shades of night had fallen, the retreating party halted, posted their sentries, lit their camp-fires, and knowing that nothing was to be feared from an enemy so lately and so totally overthrown, cooked their meat and their maize, and smoked their pipes, with the lazy indifference habitual to Indian warriors when the excitement of the chase or the fight has subsided. In the center of the camp rose a white tent, and beside it a kind of temporary arbor had been

hastily constructed from reeds and alder-boughs; beneath the latter reclined the gigantic form of Mahega, stretched at his length, and puffing out volumes of *kinnekenik** smoke, with the self-satisfied complacency of success.

Within the tent sat Forest-Bird, her eyes meekly raised to heaven, her hands crossed upon her bosom, and a small basket of corn-cakes being placed, untasted, upon the ground beside her. At a little distance, in the corner of the tent, sat her female Indian attendant, whom Mahega had permitted, with a delicacy and consideration scarcely to be expected from him, to share her mistress's captivity. He had also given orders that all the lighter articles belonging to her toilet, and to the furniture of her tent, should be conveyed with the latter, so that as yet both her privacy and comfort had been faithfully secured.

Guided by the fires, Wingenund, who had followed with unabated speed, had no difficulty in finding the Osage encampment; neither was his intelligent mind at a loss to apprehend what had occurred: he had long known the views and plans entertained by Mahega respecting Forest-Bird, and when, from a distant eminence, he caught sight of her white tent pitched in the center of a retreating Indian band, he understood in a moment her present situation, and the disastrous events that had preceded it. Although he believed that both War-Eagle and Reginald must have fallen ere his sister had been made a captive, he resolved at all hazards to communicate with her, and either to rescue her, or die in the attempt.

Having been so long encamped with the Osages, he was tolerably well versed in their language; and he also knew so well the general disposition of their outposts, that he had no doubts of being able to steal into their camp. As soon as he had gained, undiscovered, the shelter of a clump of alders, only a few bow-shots distant from the nearest fire, he stripped off and concealed his hunting-shirt, cap, leggings, and other accouterments, retaining only his belt, in which he hid a small pocket-pistol, lately given to him by Reginald, and his scalping-knife. Thus slightly armed, he threw him-

* A mixture used for smoking by the Indians of the Missouri. It was usually composed of tobacco, dried sumach-leaf, and the inner bark of the white willow, cut small, and mixed in nearly equal proportions.

self upon the grass, and commenced creeping like a serpent toward the Osage encampment.

Unlike the sentries of civilized armies, those of the North American Indians frequently sit at their appointed station, and trust to their extraordinary quickness of sight and hearing to guard them against surprise. Ere he had crept many yards, Wingenund found himself near an Indian guard seated with his back against the decayed stump of a tree; fortunately, the night was dark, and the heavy dew had so softened the grass, that the boy's pliant and elastic form wound its onward way without the slightest noise being made to alarm the drowsy sentinel. Having passed this outpost in safety, he continued his snaky progress, occasionally raising his head to glance his quick eye around and observe the nature of the obstacles that he had yet to encounter; these were less than he expected, and he contrived at length to trail himself to the back of Olitipa's tent, where he ensconced himself unperceived under cover of a large buffalo-skin, which was loosely thrown over her saddle, to protect it from the weather. His first object was to scoop out a few inches of the turf below the edge of the tent, in order that he might conveniently hear or be heard by her, without raising his voice above the lowest whisper.

After listening attentively for a few minutes, a gentle and regular breathing informed him that one sleeper was within; but Wingenund, whose sharp eyes had already observed that there were two saddles under the buffalo-robe, conjectured that her attendant was now her companion in captivity, and that the grief and anxiety of Olitipa had probably banished slumber from her eyes. To resolve these doubts, and to effect the purpose of his dangerous attempt, he now applied his mouth to the small opening that he had made at the back of the tent, and gave a low and almost inaudible sound from his lips like the chirping of a cricket. Low as it was, the sound escaped not the quick ear of Olitipa, who turned and listened more intently; again it was repeated, and the maiden felt a sudden tremor of anxiety pervade her whole frame, as from an instinctive consciousness that the sound was a signal intended for her ear.

Immediately in front of the lodge were stretched the bulky

forms of two half-slumbering Osages. She knew that the dreaded Mahega was only a few paces distant, and that if some friend were indeed near, the least indiscretion on her part might draw down upon him certain destruction ; but she was courageous by nature, and habit had given her presence of mind. Being aware that few, if any, of her captors spoke the English tongue, she said, in a low but distinct voice, " If a friend is near, let me hear the signal again ?"

Immediately the cricket-chirrup was repeated. Convinced now beyond a doubt that friendly succor was nigh, the maiden's heart throbbed with hope, fear, and many contending emotions ; but she lost not her self-possession ; and having now ascertained the spot whence the sound proceeded, she moved the skins which formed her couch to that part of the tent, and was thus enabled to rest her head within a few inches of the opening made by Wingenund below the canvas.

" Forest-Bird," whispered a soft voice, close to her ear—a voice that she had a thousand times taught to pronounce her name, and every accent of which was familiar to her ear.

" My brother !" was the low-breathed reply.

" If the Washashe do not hear, let my sister tell all, in few words."

As Forest-Bird briefly described the events before narrated,* Wingenund found some comfort in the reflection that War-Eagle, Reginald, and their band had escaped the destruction which had overwhelmed the Lenape village : when she concluded, he replied :

" It is enough : let my sister hope ; let her speak fair words to Mahega : Wingenund will find his brothers, they will follow the trail, my sister must not be afraid ; many days and nights may pass, but the Lenape will be near her, and Netis will be with them. Wingenund must go."

" That pale-faced maiden speaks to herself all through the night," said one of the Osage warriors to his comrade stretched beside him before the tent.

" I heard a sort of murmuring sound," replied the other ; " but I shut my ears. Mahega says that her words are like the voices of spirits ; it is not good to listen ! Before this

* See " White Brave."

moon is older I will ask her to curse Paketshu, that Pawnee wolf who killed my two brothers near the Nebraske."*

Profiting by this brief dialogue, Wingenund crept from under the buffalo-skin; and looking carefully around to see whether any new change had taken place since his concealment, he found that several of the Osage warriors, who had been probably eating together, were now stretched around the tent, and it was hopeless to attempt passing so many cunning and vigilant foes undiscovered.

While he was meditating on the best course to be pursued, his attention was called to a noise immediately in front of the tent, which was caused by the horse ridden by Olitipa having broken from its tether and entangled its legs in the halter. Springing on his feet, Wingenund seized the leather thong, using at the same time the expression common among the Osages for quieting a fractious horse.

"What is it?" exclaimed at once several of the warriors.

"Nothing," replied Wingenund, in their own tongue; "the pale-faced squaw's horse has got loose."

So saying, he stooped leisurely down and fastened the laryette again to the iron pin from which it had been detached. Having secured the horse, he stood up again, and stepped coolly over several of the Osages stretched around the tent; and they, naturally mistaking him for one of their own party, composed themselves again to sleep. Thus he passed through the encampment, when he again threw himself upon the ground, and again succeeded in eluding the vigilance of the outposts, and in reaching safely the covert where he had left his rifle and his accouterments.

The active spirit of Wingenund was not yet wearied of exertion. Seeing that the course taken by the Osages was westerly, he went forward in that direction, and having ascended an elevated height commanding a view of the adjoining valleys, he concealed himself with the intention of watching the enemy's march.

* The Indians believe that some persons have the power of injuring or even of killing others, at a distance of many hundred miles, by charms and spells. This belief in witchcraft is constantly noticed by Tanner and others, who have resided long among the Indians; and it seems to have been especially prevalent among the Oggibeways and other northern tribes. In illustration of a similar notion in the eastern hemisphere, see Borrow's "Zincali; or, the Gypsies of Spain," vol. i. chap. ix. on the Evil Eye.

On the following morning the Osages started at daybreak, and marched until noon, when Mahega halted them, and put in execution the plan that he had formed for throwing off any pursuit that might be attempted. He had brought four horses from the Delaware encampment: of these he retained two for the use of the Forest-Bird and her attendant, and ordered their hoofs to be covered with thick wrappers of bison-hide;* he selected also ten of the warriors, on whose courage and fidelity he could best depend; the remainder of the band he dismissed, under the conduct of Flying-Arrow, with the remaining two horses laden with a portion of the Delaware spoils and trophies, desiring them to strike off to the northward, and, making a trail as distinct as possible, to return by a circuitous march to the Osage village. Those orders were punctually obeyed, and Mahega, having seen the larger moiety of his band start on their appointed route, led off his own small party in a south-westerly direction, through the hardest and roughest surface that the prairie afforded, where he rightly judged that their trail could with difficulty be followed, even by the lynx-eyed chief of the Delawares.

From his concealment in the distance, Wingenund observed the whole maneuver: and having carefully noted the very spot where the two trails separated, he ran back to the deserted Lenape village to carry out the plan that he had formed for the pursuit. On his way he gathered a score of pliant willow rods, and these lay at his feet when he stood in the attitude of deep meditation, described at the commencement of this chapter. He knew that if War-Eagle and his party returned in safety from their expedition, their steps would be directed at once to the spot on which he now stood, and his first care was to convey to them all the information necessary for their guidance. This he was enabled to do by marking with his knife on slips of elm-bark various figures and designs, which War-Eagle would easily understand. To describe these at length would be tedious in a narrative such as the present; all readers who know any thing of the his-

* This method of baffling pursuit is not unfrequently resorted to by the Indian marauders. The reader of Shakspeare (and who that can read is not?) will remember Lear's—

“It were a delicate stratagem to shoe
A troop of horse with felt!”

tory of the North American Indians being aware of their sagacity in the use of these rude hieroglyphics: it is sufficient here to state, that Wingenund was able to express, in a manner intelligible to his kinsman, that he himself marked the elm-bark, that Olitipa was prisoner to Mahega, that the Osage trail was to the west; that it divided, the broad trail to the north being the wrong one; and that he would hang on the right one, and make more marks for War-Eagle to follow.

Having carefully noted these particulars, he stuck one of his rods into the ground, and fastened to the top of it his roll of elm-bark; then giving one more melancholy glance at the desolate scene around him, he gathered up his willow twigs, and throwing himself again upon the Osage trail, never rested his weary limbs until the burnt grass, upon a spot where the party had cooked some bison-meat, assured him that he was on their track; then he laid himself under a neighboring bush and slept soundly, trusting to his own sagacity for following the trail over the boundless prairie before him.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE TRAIL.

WAR-EAGLE and his party were returning in triumph to the village of the Lenape. By a skillful stratagem they had overtaken the party of horse-thieves, recaptured their animals, and taken many scalps; and now Reginald had gone forward alone to announce their triumph, while Baptiste and Perrot with War-Eagle and his braves came leisurely after.

Scarcely two hours had elapsed when a single horseman was seen riding toward them, in whom, as he drew near, they had some difficulty in recognizing Reginald, for his dress was soiled, his countenance haggard and horror-stricken, while the foaming sides and wide dilated nostril of Nekimi showed that he had been riding with frantic and furious speed. All

made way for him, and he spoke to none until he drew his bridle by the side of War-Eagle, and beckoned to him and to Baptiste to come aside. For a moment he looked at the former in silence with an eye so troubled, that the guide feared that some dreadful accident had unsettled his young master's mind; but that fear was almost immediately relieved by Reginald, who, taking his friend's hand, said to him, in a voice almost inarticulate from suppressed emotion:

"I bring you, War-Eagle, dreadful—dreadful news."

"War-Eagle knows that the sun does not always shine," was the calm reply.

"But this is darkness," said Reginald, shuddering; "black darkness, where there is neither sun, nor moon, not even a star!"

"My brother," said the Indian, drawing himself proudly to his full height, "my brother speaks without thinking. The sun shines still, and the stars are bright in their place. The Great Spirit dwells always among them; a thick cloud may hide them from our eyes, but my brother knows they are shining as brightly as ever."

The young man looked with wonder and awe upon the lofty countenance of this untaught philosopher of the wilderness; and he replied: "War-Eagle is right. The Great Spirit sees all, and whatever He does is good! But sometimes the cup of misfortune is so full and bitter that man can hardly drink it and live."

"Let Netis speak all and conceal nothing," said the chief; "what has he seen at the village?"

"*There is no village!*" said the young man, in an agony of grief. "The lodges are overthrown; Tameund, the Black Father, Olitipa, all are gone; wolves and vultures are quarreling over the bones of unburied Lenape!"

As Reginald concluded his tragic narrative, an attentive observer might have seen that the muscles of the Indian contracted for an instant, but no change was visible on his haughty and commanding brow, as he stood before the bearer of this dreadful news a living impersonation of the stern and stoic philosophy of his race.

"War-Eagle," said Reginald, "can you explain this calamity—do you see through it—how has it happened?"

"*Mahega*," was the brief and emphatic reply.

"Do you believe that the monster has murdered all, men, women and children?" said Reginald, whose thoughts were fixed on Forest-Bird, but whose lips refused to pronounce her name.

"No," replied the chief, "not all; the life of Olitipa is safe, if she becomes the wife of that wolf; for the others, War-Eagle can not tell. The Washashe love to take scalps—woman, child, or warrior, it is all one to them; it is enough. War-Eagle must speak to his people."

After a minute's interval, the chief accordingly summoned his faithful band around him, and in brief but pathetic language informed them of the disaster that had befallen their tribe. Reginald could not listen unmoved to the piercing cries and groans with which the Delawares rent the air on receiving this intelligence, although his own heart was racked with anxiety concerning the fate of his beloved Forest-Bird. While the surrounding warriors thus gave unrestrained vent to their lamentations, War-Eagle stood like some antique statue of bronze, in an attitude of haughty repose, his broad chest thrown forward and his erect front, bearing the impress of an unconquerable will, bidding defiance alike to the human weakness that might assail from within, and the storms of fate that might threaten from without. The stern and impressive silence of his grief produced, ere long, its effect upon his followers; by degrees the sounds of wailing died away, and as the short twilight of that climate was rapidly merging into darkness, the chief, taking Reginald's arm, moved forward, whispering to him in a tone, the deep and gloomy meaning of which haunted his memory long afterward.

"The spirit of Tamenund calls to War-Eagle and asks, 'Where is *Mahega*?'"

War-Eagle moved directly forward to the place where the lodge of Tamenund and the tent of the Forest-Bird had been pitched. As they approached it, Reginald felt his heart faint within him, and the color fled from his cheek and lip.

Baptiste, taking his master's hand, said to him, in a tone of voice the habitual roughness of which was softened by

genuine sympathy, "Master Reginald, remember where you are; the eyes of the Lenape are upon the adopted brother of their chief; they have lost fathers, brothers, wives and children; see how they bear their loss; let them not think Netis less brave than themselves."

"Thank you, thank you, honest Baptiste," said the unhappy young man, wringing the woodsman's horny hand; "I will neither disgrace my own nor my adopted name; but who among them can compare his loss with mine?—so young, so fair, so gentle, my own affianced bride, pledged to me under the eye of Heaven, and now in the hands of that fierce and merciless villain."

At this moment a cry of exultation burst from the lips of War-Eagle, as his eye fell upon the wand and slips of bark left by Wingenund. One by one the chief examined them, and deciphering their meaning with rapid and unerring sagacity, communicated to his friend that the youth was still alive and free; that Olitipa, though a prisoner, was well, and that a fine trail was open for them to follow.

"Let us start upon it this instant," cried Reginald, with the reawakened impetuosity of his nature.

"War-Eagle must take much counsel with himself," replied the chief, gravely. "The ancient men of the Lenape are asleep, their bones are uncovered; War-Eagle must not forget them; but," he added, while a terrible fire shot from his dark eye, "if the Great Spirit grants him life, he will bring Netis within reach of Mahega before this young moon's horn becomes a circle."

He then proceeded to select ten of the youngest and most active of the band, who were intended to accompany him, with Reginald, Baptiste and Perrot, on the trail of Mahega; the remainder of the party, under the guidance of an experienced brave, were to follow the more numerous body of the Osages, to hang on their trail, and never to leave it while there remained a chance or hope of an enemy's scalp. Two of the Delawares were at the same time dispatched, one to seek the aid and sympathy of the Konsas and other friendly or neutral tribes, the other to prowl about the woods in the neighborhood, to collect any fugitives who might have escaped, and guide any party that might be formed to aid in

the meditated pursuit. He also ordered the larger party to gather the bones and relics of their kindred, and to perform the rites of sepulture according to the custom of the tribe.

While the chief was giving these instructions to the several parties above designated, Reginald sat musing on the very grass over which the tent of his beloved had been spread, no blood had there been spilt; it had been spared the desecration of the vulture and the wolf; her spirit seemed to hover unseen over the spot; and shutting his eyes, the lover fancied he could still hear her sweet voice, attuned to the simple accompaniment of her Mexican guitar.

How long this waking dream possessed his senses he knew not, but he was awakened from it by War-Eagle, who whispered in his ear, "The trail of Mahega waits for my brother." Ashamed of his temporary weakness, Reginald sprung to his feet, and thence upon the back of Nekimi. The chief having chosen four of the strongest and best from the recaptured horses, one for the use of Perrot, the others for such emergencies as might occur, left the remainder with the main body of the Delawares, and, accompanied by his small party, thoroughly well armed and equipped, started on the trail in pursuit of the Osages.

Before many days they came up with Wingenund, and kept on the chase day after day without a pause, till it brought them in sight of the outlying eastern spurs of the Rocky Mountains.

CHAPTER III.

ETHELSTON.

Soon after the departure of Reginald for the west, the absent sailor, Edward Ethelston,* had returned home, the accepted lover of Lucy Brandon, and had almost immediately been compelled to depart for St. Louis to settle some business with the fur companies on which a large portion of his own and his guardian's fortune was embarked.

* See "White Brave."

The reasons for his course were simple. The fur companies had been fighting for the monopoly of the prairie trade ever since their first establishment.

During the occurrence of the events related in the preceding chapter, the disputes and difficulties attending the distribution of peltries at St. Louis had rather increased than diminished, and Ethelston had found himself compelled, however unwillingly, to bid adieu to Lucy, and take a trip to the Mississippi for the arrangement of his guardian's affairs in that quarter; a considerable portion of the fortune that he inherited from his father was invested in the same speculation, and he could not, without incurring the charge of culpable negligence, leave it in the hands of others at a great distance, many of whose interests might perhaps be at variance with those of Colonel Brandon and himself.

He had been only a short time in St. Louis when, one day, on passing the cathedral, he met two men, whose appearance attracted his attention. The one was past the meridian of life, and the benevolent thoughtfulness of his countenance accorded well with the sober suit of black that indicated the profession to which he belonged; the other was a stout, square-built man, evidently cast in a coarser mold than his companion, but apparently conversing with him on terms of friendly familiarity. After looking steadfastly at this second, Ethelston felt convinced that he was not mistaken in addressing him:

"Bearskin, my good friend, how come you to be in St. Louis? I thought you were busy, bear and buffalo hunting with my friend Reginald, among the Missouri Delawares?"

"Ha! Master Ethelston," replied the sturdy voyageur, "I am right glad to see your face here. We have been in some trouble of late, and instead of our hunting the bears, the bears have hunted us."

"I see you have been in some trouble," said Ethelston, noticing for the first time the boatman's scars and bruises; "but tell me," he added, hastily catching him by the arm, "has any evil befallen my friend, my brother Reginald?"

"No harm that I know of," replied the other; "but I must say that things wern't what a man might call altogether pleasant, where I left him."

"What!" exclaimed Ethelston, with an indignation that he made no attempt to conceal, "you left him in danger or in difficulties, and can give no account of him? Bearskin, I would not have believed this of you, unless I had it from your own lips!"

"Master Ethelston," answered the justly-offended voyageur, "a man that goes full swing down-stream of his own notions, without heeding oar or helm, is sure to run athwart a snag; here's my worthy friend here, Paul Muller, and though he is a preacher, I'll hold him as honest a man as any in the territory; he can tell you the whole story from one end to t'other; and when he's done so, perhaps you'll be sorry for what you've said to old Bearskin."

"I am already sorry," replied Ethelston, moved by the earnest simplicity of the scared and weather-beaten boatman. "I am already sorry that I have done you wrong, but you will make allowance for my impatience and anxiety concerning my brother's fate!" (Ethelston always spoke of Reginald as his brother, for he had a secret and undefined pleasure in so doing, as it implied his union with the sister of his friend.) Paul Muller, easily guessing from the few words that had passed that the person now addressing Bearskin was the Edward Ethelston of whom Reginald had so often spoken to him, said:

"Sir, you certainly did an injustice to Bearskin, in thinking him capable of deserting a friend in need; but the apology you have offered is, I am sure, sufficient to satisfy him. The intelligence which I have to communicate respecting Reginald Brandon and his party is in some respects exceedingly melancholy; if you will accompany me to our lodging, which is just at hand, I will explain it to you in full; meanwhile, rest satisfied with the assurance that, to the best of our belief, your friend is safe and well in health.*

After his interview with Paul Muller, Ethelston pursued the business which had brought him to St. Louis with such vigor and energy, that at the close of a week's negotiation he was able to inform Colonel Brandon that by sacrificing a small portion of the disputed claim, he had adjusted the

* For Paul Muller's character, etc., see "White Brave."

matter upon terms which he trusted his guardian would not consider disadvantageous; his letter concluded thus:

"Having now explained these transactions, and informed you in another letter of the melancholy fate of Mike Smith, and some of his companions, I must announce to you my intention of setting off immediately in search of Reginald, with the best appointed force that I can collect here, for I am seriously apprehensive for his safety, surrounded, as he is, by roving tribes of Indians, with some of whom he and his party are at open war; while the band of Delawares, upon whose friendship he might have relied, is almost destroyed. As it may be a work of some time and difficulty to find Reginald in a region of such boundless extent, I must entreat you not to feel uneasy on my account, should my absence be more protracted than I would wish it to be, for I shall be accompanied by Bearskin and other experienced trappers; and I know that even Lucy would have no smile for me on my return, if I came back to Mooshanne without making every exertion to extricate her brother from the difficulties in which these unexpected incidents have involved him."

By the same post Ethelston wrote also to inform Lucy of his resolution; and though she felt extremely vexed and anxious on account of the lengthened absence which it foretold, still she did him the justice in heart to own that he was acting as she would have wished him to act.

Not a day passed that he did not consult with Paul Muller, and also with the most experienced agents of the fur companies, in order that he might provide the articles most requisite for his contemplated expedition, and secure the services of men thoroughly trained and accustomed to mountain and prairie life.

In this last respect he was fortunate enough to engage a man named Pierre, a half-breed from the Upper Missouri, whose life had been spent among the most remote trading-posts, where his skill as a hunter, as well as interpreting Indian languages, was held in high estimation. Bearskin, who was almost recovered from his wound, and from his short fit of ill-humor with Ethelston, agreed to join the party, and the good missionary resolved to brave all dangers and fatigues in the hope of rejoining, and perhaps of being instrumental in rescuing his beloved pupil.

With unwearied industry and exertion, Ethelston was able, in one week subsequent to the date of his letter, to leave St.

Louis in search of his friend, attended by eight hardy and experienced men, all of whom, excepting the missionary, were well armed, and furnished with excellent horses, mules and every necessary for their long and arduous undertaking.

Guided by Bearskin, they reached without accident or adventure the site of the desolate Lenape village, in the Osage country, and there fell in with one of the young Delawares detached by War-Eagle to observe what might be passing in the neighborhood; from this youth they learned that War-Eagle and Reginald, with a small party, had gone westward in pursuit of Mahega, and that the larger body of the surviving Delawares were on the trail of the more numerous band of the treacherous Osages.

Ethelston wished to go on at once in search of his friend, but the youth insisted that he should first assist his band in taking vengeance on their enemies. Promises and threats proved equally unavailing; and after the missionary had exhausted all his eloquence in endeavoring to promote peace, he was himself compelled to assure Ethelston that his only chance of finding the trail of his friend in a spot so intersected by multitudinous paths, was to accede to the terms proposed by the Indian.

Ethelston could not press any further objection; and his party, under the guidance of the young Delaware, was soon in rapid motion upon the trail of the larger body of the Osages, who were, as it may be remembered, already pursued by a band of Lenape warriors.

Toward the close of the second day's march, Ethelston and his party met the latter returning in triumph from a successful pursuit of their enemies, whom they had overtaken and surprised before they could reach the main body of the Osage village. The attack was made by night, and the Delawares had taken many scalps without the loss of a single man; but their number was not sufficient to justify their remaining in the neighborhood of a force so much superior to their own, so they had retreated to the southward, and were now on their way to their former village, where they intended to perform more at their leisure the funeral ceremonies due to their aged chief, and those who had been killed with him, and to appease their unquiet spirits by offering at their graves the

trophies taken during their late expedition. A few of the most daring and adventurous entreated permission to join Ethelston's band in his search for War-Eagle, their favorite leader; nor was he by any means sorry to grant their request, justly considering the addition of ten well-armed Lenape warriors as a most desirable reinforcement to his party.

As soon as the selection was made, they separated at once from the remaining body of Delawares, and, guided by the youth before mentioned, threw themselves upon the trail of Mahega and his pursuers.

They came up with the latter without much difficulty, their progress being slow from the difficulty of trailing. They found them at fault in a valley where Mahega had evidently been before them.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TWO TRAILS.

A BRIGHT sun shone upon a little valley, which, twenty-four hours before, had been deserted by the Osages, when a tall form glided cautiously to its entrance, and concealed by the bushes that fringed its edge. Glancing hastily around. War-Eagle, for he it was, who was guiding his party in pursuit, returned to announce to them his belief that the enemy had decamped; nevertheless, the usual precautions were adopted against a surprise. A small body of Delawares were thrown forward to reconnoiter the neighboring woods, under the command of Atto, while the chief, accompanied by Reginald, Ethelston, and the rest of the party entered the deserted Osage encampment; every nook and cranny among the adjacent woods and rocks was diligently explored, and not till then were they convinced that their crafty foe had given them the slip. While the rest of the party were busied in this search, the eye of Reginald Brandon rested in absorbed attention upon the spot to which his steps had been first led, as if by the power of instinct; it was a small plot, completely sheltered by the rock which guarded the front of the recess;

a few holes made in the turf showed where pegs had been driven in to secure a circular tent: "Here," said Reginald to Ethelston, "here is the spot trodden by her dear feet—here have her weary limbs reposed during the long watches of the night—here have her prayers been offered up at noon and eve for that rescue which we seem doomed, alas! never to accomplish!"

"Say not a word, my son," said Paul Muller, laying his hand kindly on the excited Reginald's shoulder; "say not a word, my son, which would seem to limit the power or the mercy of that Being to whom those prayers were addressed. Hope is the privilege, perseverance the duty of man; let us faithfully use these bounties, and leave the issue to His all-wise disposal."

"I am indeed ashamed of my hasty expression, worthy father," said Reginald, frankly; "but I will draw encouragement from your suggestion, and banish every desponding thought, while there remains a chance of success, or even a glimmering of hope."

Wingenund who had approached unobserved to the side of his friend, whispered to him in a low voice, "Netis is right: here it was that Olitipa sat; she is not far, the Lenape warriors never lose a trail."

While they were thus conversing, a messenger from War-Eagle summoned them to a consultation on the plan of pursuit which should be adopted.

War-Eagle being well aware that Mahega was not less skilled than himself in all the stratagems and devices of Indian warfare, set about his difficult task with a deliberation that did not suit the eager temper of Reginald Brandon; nevertheless, he had so much confidence in the sagacity of his Indian brother, that he restrained all expression of his impatience, and agreed without objection to the method proposed by him at the council. Agreeably to this plan, Paul Muller, Perrot, and several of the hunters and Delawares, remained on guard at the camp, while the main body, divided into small parties of two or three in each, were to explore every trail that offered a probability of success, and to return before nightfall to report the result of their search. War-Eagle set out, accompanied by Atto; Reginald was joined by

Ethelston and Baptiste; the other parties took the respective quarters assigned to them, and Wingenund, who remained some time after they had started, left the camp alone.

The trail followed by Reginald and his friends led toward the upper part of the valley, over broken and bushy ground, intersected here and there by streamlets, and small springs, which just afforded water enough to soften the herbage, in which they were soon lost.

After they had marched a considerable distance in silence, Reginald inquired the opinion of his guide.

"Why you see," replied the latter, "the Osages have driven their horses several times this way to feed, and their marks are plain enough; but if a man may judge by the looks of the country forward, this is not likely to be the right trail. It seems to get smaller the further we go; and I'm inclined to think it's only been a hunting-path into the woods."

After this unsatisfactory observation, Baptiste again went forward, until he stopped at the skeleton of a deer. Here all traces of a further trail ceased, and the disappointed Reginald exclaimed:

"Baptiste, your suggestion was only too correct; we have lost our time; let us return, and search in some other direction."

"Not so fast, Master Reginald," replied the cautious guide; "there's as many tricks in an Indian's brain as there are holes in a honeycomb. The animal has been dead some time, and unless this grass deceive me, it has been trodden within these two days. *Voyons vite*, as they say up north. Stand quite still; and you too, Master Ethelston, keep on that side of the deer's bones, while I have a bit of a hunt after the wood fashion."

So saying, the guide, resting the "Doctor" upon the skeleton, and throwing himself upon his knees, began to turn over the leaves, and to examine minutely every blade of grass and fallen twig, muttering, as he pursued his task, "If War-Eagle, or one of his double-sighted Delawares, were here, he would pick out this trail in no time. My eyes are not so good as they were some years back; but they will serve this purpose, however. This is only bungling work, after all; one—two;—yes, I think there's been two of them. *Capote!*

they've strewed sticks and leaves over the back trail!" And the rough woodsman, as, creeping forward on his knees, he discovered each succeeding step on the trail, hummed snatches of an old Canadian song, the only words of which that the two friends could distinguish being, "Vogue, vogue la bonne pirogue!"

Meanwhile, Baptiste having ascertained the direction of the trail, cast his eyes forward, and, like a shrewd reasoner jumped to his conclusion—in this instance more correctly than is usually the case with the persons to whom he has been likened. Pushing aside the bushes which grew at the base of a rock, he soon observed a large aperture, closed by a stone of corresponding dimensions. This last was, with the aid of Reginald, soon displaced, and a *cache* of the Osages, together with the plundered treasure it contained, was exposed to view.

"So, so!" chuckled the guide, "we have found the thieving fox's hole; an' they do not cover their trail somewhat better from the eyes of War-Eagle, we shall have their skins before three nights are over; why, a town lawyer could have treed this 'coon!"

Three large blankets were easily tied into the form of so many sacks, of which each threw one over his shoulder, and they returned with their recovered spoil to the encampment.

Great was the surprise of the Delawares when they saw the three white men coming in, hot and weary with their load; greater still when the blankets were opened, and their contents laid out upon the turf, among which were found lead, powder, cloth, knives, beads, paint, medicine-bags, and a variety of small articles, plundered from the lodge of the unfortunate Tamenund, and those adjoining. Among these were a few books, and instruments belonging to Forest-Bird and Paul Muller, all of which were immediately delivered over to the latter.

A council was then opened by War-Eagle, who desired the several parties who had been out in different directions, to state the result of the search. This was done with the brief simplicity usually observed by Indians on such occasions. But nothing of importance was elicited; for of the trails

which they had examined, none seemed to be that pursued by the Osages in their retreat. During the speech of one of the Delaware warriors, Wingenund, who had not before made his appearance, noiselessly entered the circle, and taking his place by the side of Reginald, leaned in silence upon his rifle.

Baptiste, whose age and experience entitled him to speak, and who suspected that the chief had not been altogether unsuccessful in his search, addressed him thus: "Has War-Eagle no word for his warriors? Grande-Hache and Netis have found the stolen goods: has the path of the thief been dark to the eyes of the chief?"

"The foot of War-Eagle has been on the Washashe trail," was the calm reply.

A murmur of satisfaction ran through the assembly, and Reginald could scarcely restrain the open expression of his impatient joy.

"The trail is fresh," continued the chief; "not more than two dews have fallen on the prints of foot and hoof."

"Did my brother see the foot-marks of Olitipa and the Comanche girl?" inquired Reginald, hastily.

"He did not; but he saw the trail of Olitipa's horse; iron is on two of its feet." *

During this conversation Wingenund more than once looked up in the face of his white brother, then cast his eyes again upon the ground without speaking. The expression of the youth's countenance did not escape the observation of War-Eagle, who thus addressed him: "Has the young warrior of the race of Tamenund seen nothing? He has been far over the prairie; his step was the last to return to camp; his eyes are not shut; there are words in his breast; why are his lips silent?"

The youth modestly replied, in a voice, the singularly musical tone of which charmed and surprised Ethelston, who had seldom heard him speak before, "Wingenund waited until warriors who have seen many summers, and traveled the war-path often, should have spoken. Wingenund has been on the Washashe trail."

* It may well be supposed that the horses used by the Indians on the prairie are never shod. The palfrey of Olitipa had probably been procured from some Mexican trader.

At this announcement, an exclamation of surprise was uttered by several of the bystanders, for all had seen that the direction whence the youth had returned to the camp was quite different from that which had been pursued by War-Eagle, and yet the latter had affirmed that he had been on the trail of the enemy. The chief himself was, indeed surprised, but he knew the diffidence, as well as the acute sagacity of the young speaker; and although confident that he was not mistaken in his own judgment, he was not by any means disposed to overrule, without careful inquiry, that of his brother. The conversation between them was thus pursued:

"Were there horses on the trail found by Wingenund?"

"There were not."

"Were the men many in number?"

"Wingenund can not surely say; the trail was old and beaten; buffalo had passed on it; of fresh marks he could not see many; more than four, not so many as ten."

"Let my brother point with his finger to the line of the trail."

The youth slowly turned, cast his eye upward at the sun, thence at the rocks overhanging the valley to the northward, and then pointed steadily in a north-easterly direction.

War-Eagle, well assured that his own observation had been correct, and that he had followed a trail leading toward the north-west, thus continued: "There are many nations and bands of Indians here; a false light may have shone on the path. How does my young brother know that the feet of the Washashe had trodden it?"

There was a natural dignity without the slightest touch of vanity, in the manner of the youth, as he replied: "The Great Spirit has given eyes to Wingenund, and he has learnt from War-Eagle to know the moccasin of a Washashe from that of a Dahcotah, a Pawnee, a Shawano, or a Maha."

After musing a moment, War-Eagle continued: "Did my brother find the foot of Olitipa and the Comanche girl on the path?"

"He could not find the mark of their feet, yet he believes they are on the path," was the unhesitating reply.

Reginald and Ethelston looked at the speaker with undis-

guised astonishment; and War-Eagle, although he could not believe but what the latter was mistaken, continued thus to question him: "My brother's speech is dark; if he could find no trail of the women, why does he think that they are on the path? Have the Washashe carried them?"

"Not so," replied Wingenund. "Twice the trail crossed a soft bank of sand, where water runs from the mountains in winter; there were the marks of two who had passed lately, their feet large as those of the warriors, the tread light as that of a woman or young boy."

"My brother has eyes as sharp, and feet as light, as a panther," War-Eagle said, in a kindly tone, "but a trail in this strange country may deceive a man who has been on the war-path for twenty summers. The trail followed by War-Eagle goes through that small valley between the hills," pointing to the north-west. "Atto was with him; they knew the iron hoof of Olitipa's horse; they found this scrap, torn from her dress by a bramble stretching across the path. Is my brother satisfied?"

As the chief spoke he held up before the council a shred of a silk kerchief, such as none, certainly, except she whom they sought, was likely to have worn in that region. Again a murmur of approbation ran through the assembly; and Reginald, vexed that his young friend should have been subjected to such a disappointment, looked toward him, in order to see whether he bore it with equanimity.

The countenance of Wingenund underwent not any change, save that a quiet smile lurked in the corner of his mouth, as he replied: "My brother and Atto are both known on the war-path; their feet are swift, and no lies are found on their lips; it must be true that they have seen the hoof-print of Olitipa's horse; it is true that the piece of dress torn off by the bramble belonged to her. Very cunning are the Washashe wolves; they have tried to blind the eyes of the Lenape; they have made two paths; let my brother follow that which he has found, and Wingenund the other; perhaps they joined beyond the mountain."

"There is sense in what the lad proposes," said Baptiste, who had listened attentively hitherto without speaking, and who remembered the acuteness shown by Wingenund near

the banks of the Ohio. "If he is sure that he has been on the Washashe trail, 'tis like enough they have divided to throw us off the scent; they will come together again further north."

Again War-Eagle mused in silence for a few minutes; then abruptly turning toward Reginald, he inquired: "What is the thought of Netis?"

"I think," replied the latter, "that Wingenund would never have spoken as he has spoken, were it not that he felt assured of all that he said. I would venture my life, and what is now far dearer to me than my life, on the truth of his words."

The youth looked gratefully at the speaker, and a smile of gratified pride stole over his eloquent countenance.

"It is enough," said War-Eagle, with dignity: "let Wingenund go upon his path: he shall not go alone. Which path does my brother Netis choose? He has heard all that has been said?"

Reginald was sorely puzzled: on one side was the sagacious experience of the chief, added to the strong evidence afforded by the shred of silk; on the other, the confident assurance of a youth, of whose diffidence and acuteness he had seen so many proofs. While he was still hesitating, he saw the eyes of the latter fixed upon him with an earnest, imploring expression, that decided him at once.

"I will go with my young brother," he said firmly; "Grand-Hache, Ethelston, and six men shall go with us; War-Eagle, with the rest of the party, shall go on the large Washashe trail that he has struck. Let the chief say how we shall meet beyond the mountain, if either of the trails prove false."

"It is good," said War-Eagle: "Atto shall lead the warriors who go with my white brother, and before the third sun rises we will come together again, and talk of what we have seen."

Having thus spoken, the chief waved his hand to intimate that the council was dissolved; and calling Wingenund and Atto aside, he gave them clear and rapid instructions as to the course to be pursued in case of the trails diverging to opposite quarters, and he established at the same time various signals to be used in case of necessity.

Pierre and M. Perrot asked and obtained leave to join Reginald's party; most of the horses and all of the spare baggage followed that of War-Eagle, who led them off through the defile in the mountains before alluded to, while Wingenund led the way to the trail which he had discovered, with the light, springy step of an antelope, and an expression of bright confidence on his countenance, which communicated a similar feeling to those who might otherwise have been disinclined to trust themselves to the guidance of a youth on his first war-path.

CHAPTER V.

THE WHITE TENT ON THE HILL.

FULLY impressed with the serious responsibility that he had incurred, the youth set forth upon the trail with a gravity of demeanor which contrasted strongly with his almost boyish years. Yet while his keen eye darted from point to point, suffering not a blade of grass to escape its scrutiny, his countenance wore a beaming look of confidence that imparted its cheering influence to the whole party.

For some hours he marched rapidly forward, with the assured step of a man who was treading a familiar path. Atto followed at no great distance, next to whom on the trail, came Reginald, with Ethelston, Baptiste and the other whites, the line being closed by the Delawares, who brought up the rear. It may easily be imagined that Reginald bent his eyes anxiously on the path; but although frequent traces were discernible of the passage of men, as well as of various animals, he could not discover the slightest indication of the marks for which he looked; neither did the observation of the more experienced Baptiste meet with any better success.

When Wingenund reached the streamlet, on the sandy edge of which he had before noticed the light tread of a foot, which, in spite of its dimensions, he believed to be that of Forest-Bird or her attendant, he halted the party, and summoned Atto to a close examination of the trail. Stooping

over it, the Indian looked long and earnestly, after which he shook his head, as if dissatisfied, and muttered a few words, the meaning of which Baptiste was not near enough to catch. Wingenund made no reply, and crossing the brook, resumed the trail on its opposite bank.

"Does Atto find the mark of woman's feet on the sand?" inquired Baptiste.

"He is not sure; bison have passed over the marks, and trodden them," was the evasive reply, and the party proceeded on the track.

Nothing of any importance occurred for some time to enliven the tedium of the march. The sanguine hopes of Reginald had been checked by what had fallen from Atto, of whose acuteness he justly entertained a high opinion. Ethelston seemed buried in deep reflection; and even the comic sallies of Monsieur Perrot failed to excite any mirth in those to whom they were addressed.

"Ethelston, I fear that I acted imprudently," said his friend, in a low voice, "when I preferred the counsel of this youth to the more experienced opinion of War-Eagle; yet there was something in his manner that I could not resist."

"Doubtless," replied Ethelston, "the counsel of the elder warrior was entitled to the greatest weight; and yet I do not think that he would himself have placed this detachment under the guidance of Wingenund, unless he felt sure that the latter had strong grounds for the tenacity with which he clung to his opinion."

"I would willingly peril my life on his truth and fidelity," said Reginald. "The question is, whether on this occasion he may not have been led into some error by the very eagerness of his wishes, and the ardor of his temperament."

Scarcely had he uttered these words, when Wingenund stooped to pick up a small object which his quick eye had caught beside the trail; in another minute he placed it in the hand of Reginald, while a triumphant smile lit up his animated features. The object referred to was a slip of folded paper, damp with the dew which had fallen upon it. Reginald opened its folds, then gazed upon it in silence, with a fixed look, like one in a trance, while his powerful frame

trembled from head to foot. The paroxysm of excitement lasted but for a moment, then putting the slip of paper into the hand of Ethelston, he threw himself into the arms of Wingenund; and if a tear escaped him, it fell unseen upon the bosom which he pressed with grateful affection to his heart.

Meanwhile Ethelston made himself master of the secret which had produced an effect so sudden as to cause the greatest astonishment in the whole party, now gathered round to ascertain what had happened. He had read on the slip the magical word "Follow," written in a distinct, legible hand, and every doubt as to the Forest-Bird having passed along the trail vanished in an instant. This was no sooner made known to the hunters, and by Baptiste to the Delawares, than a shout of triumph from the whole party roused Reginald from the momentary weakness into which he had been betrayed.

"Follow thee!" he exclaimed, aloud, holding the paper in his left hand, and grasping a rifle in his right; "follow thee, dearest one! yes, over prairie and mountain, through valley and river, in cold or in heat, in hunger or thirst, there are those here who will never cease to follow thee, until thou art set free, and the injuries done to thyself and thy kindred dearly avenged!"

Again a shout of sympathetic enthusiasm broke from the party, as they caught the words of their leader, and read on his glowing countenance the intense ardor of feeling, too strong to be repressed.

What must have been, in the mean time, the sensations of the Delaware youth? The affectionate yearnings of his heart toward his adopted brother, his deep anxiety for his sister's fate, his future fame as the rising war-chief of his tribe, all these combined together to swell the triumph of the hour; yet there was not visible in his features the slightest appearance of gratified pride or vanity; and if his dark eye beamed with a brighter luster, it was not so much with self-congratulation at what he had done, as with high aspirations for the glorious task before him.

Ethelston, who had watched him closely, was surprised at his calm, unmoved demeanor, and whispered to Baptiste,

"Wingenund evinces little anxiety or emotion on this occasion ; and yet this undoubted token which he has found on the trail must be a great triumph to him, after the doubts expressed by so many warriors of greater experience."

"It's partly the natur', and partly the trainin' of the boy," replied the guide, leaning on his long rifle ; "the stronger his feelings the less will he show 'em to another man. I reckon this has been one of the proudest moments of his life, yet, as you say, he looks almost as if he'd nothing to do with the matter ; and he'd look the same if the Osages were pinchin' his flesh with hot tongs. Wingenund is three years older now than he was last month !"

"You are right, Baptiste," replied Ethelston : "it is not days, nor weeks, nor months, but rough trials, brave deeds, and deep feelings that make up the calendar of human life."

So saying, he sighed, and musingly resumed his place in the line of march.

Again Wingenund moved swiftly forward on the trail, and the whole party followed, their hopes excited, and their spirits raised by the occurrence above related. Reginald walked silently on, still clasping in his hand the magic token which had conjured up hopes and thoughts too much for utterance. From time to time his lips unconsciously murmured, "Follow !" and then the idea shot like fire through his brain, that all his power to obey the dear behest hung upon the sagacity of the youth who was now tracing the steps of an enemy, skilled in all the wiles of Indian warfare, and whose object it clearly was to baffle pursuit.

Before the close of day the watchful perseverance of Wingenund was again rewarded by finding another of the slips of paper dropped by Forest-Bird, which he brought as before, to Reginald. The magic "Follow" again met his longing eyes ; and as he announced it to the rest of the party, a joyful anticipation of success pervaded every breast.

Wingenund had no difficulty in making out the trail until he reached the banks of a river, in crossing which Mahega had taken pains to mislead his pursuers. Here the youth halted, and informed Reginald that he might look for game during the remainder of the day, as it would be necessary

for him and Atto to search for War-Eagle's party, and with them to find the right trail on the opposite bank.

The two Delawares started at a rapid pace to the westward, bestowing as they went careful attention on various tracks of bison and other animals which had crossed at the different fords that they passed. After a toilsome march of some hours they fell in with War-Eagle's party, whom they found occupied in a like investigation. The chief learnt his young brother's success with undisguised pleasure; his nature was too noble to entertain a thought of jealousy; and one of the first wishes of his heart was to see Wingenund take his place among the first warriors of the tribe. He had ascertained beyond a doubt that although the horses of the Osages had crossed the river opposite to the trail which he had been following, they had not traveled far in that direction, but had returned to the bed of the river for the obvious purpose of baffling pursuit; and the Delawares now crossed to the northern bank, and after minute examination of every path and track which led from it, they arrived in the evening at the point from whence Wingenund started, confident that the right trail must, if the Osages had crossed at all, be at some spot lower down the stream.

The whole party, now again reunited, encamped for the night, and related, over their evening meal, the indications and tracks which they had remarked on their respective lines of march. At the earliest dawn War-Eagle was again afoot, and after an hour's patient search he struck a trail, which he pronounced, without hesitation, to be that of the Osages. As it led through a wooded and hilly region along the base of the Great Mountains, abounding in narrow and dangerous passes, every precaution was used against ambush or surprise; War-Eagle, Wingenund, and Atto leading the advance, with several of the most swift and skillful of their warriors, and the white men, who brought up the rear being cautioned against straggling or falling behind the main body.

Another slip of paper found upon the trail, bearing Forest-Bird's inspiring word "Follow," raised the spirits of the party to the highest pitch. They halted at mid-day to refresh themselves and their horses for an hour, under the shade of some spreading cedars, above which rose a high conical

peak, on the sides of which were scattered a few dwarf oaks, and other timber of stunted growth. Obeying a signal from War-Eagle, Reginald climbed with him to the summit of this hill, whence they could command an extensive view of the sand-hills and undulating ocean of prairie to the eastward, while above them to the westward towered the lofty and still distant mountain-tops, clad in their bright mantle of eternal snow.

But it was not to enjoy the splendor of this magnificent prospect that the Delaware had toiled up this steep ascent, or that he now cast his restless and searching eye toward the north and east horizon; he had another object in view. Neither did he seem to have altogether failed in its attainment, for after gazing long and intently upon a spot to the northward, his countenance brightened, and he desired Reginald, who was unable to distinguish so distant a speck with the naked eye, to examine it carefully with his telescope, for that he would see something there that would make his heart beat.

Reginald did so, and having succeeded in catching the indicated object with his glass, he exclaimed, "War-Eagle, my brother, you are right; I can see them plainly, one—two—three—ay, twenty Indian lodges, and *the white tent* among them. Heaven be praised for all its mercies, we shall save her yet!"

For a few moments the chief was silent; then, he said, "Let my brother use the glass again, and say how many lodges he can count."

"There seem to be very many," said Reginald, after a careful survey, "more than fifty, but I can not count them, for the tent is on a small hill, and some may be hid behind it."

"Mahega smokes the pipe with a powerful tribe," said the Delaware, musing; and the two friends descended the hill, each contemplating, according to their respective characters, the difficulties yet to be encountered, and the means by which those difficulties might be overcome.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FORTUNES OF WAR.

THE evening passed away with the rapidity usual in that western region, where twilight has no sooner thrown its dusky hue over mountain and plain, than it again yields its place to the darker gloom of night; and yet it were a libel upon nature to call by the name of gloom that uncertain light in which that mighty landscape reposed. The moon was half full, and her beams, scarcely piercing through the deep foliage of the wooded vale, streaked with silver lines its mossy herbage; eastward lay the vast expanse of undulating prairie, on which countless herds of bison lazily cropped the dew-sprinkled grass, while high above the scene towered the gigantic peaks of the Western Andes, slumbering in a light as cold and pale as their own eternal snow.

Nothing was heard to disturb the reign of silence save the distant murmur of the streamlets as they plashed from rock to rock in their descent to the quiet river that flowed beneath; or here and there the stealthy foot of the panther or prowling bear. A few stars glimmering in the vault above, and clouds of ever-varying shape flitted athwart its surface, now hiding, and again partially revealing, the dark outlines of forest, vale, and rugged cliff.

It was an hour and a scene calculated to inspire thoughts of awe, piety, and gratitude toward the Creator; of love, gentleness, and peace toward His creatures; and yet, through those groves and glens feet more stealthy than the panther's step, foes more fell than the prowling bear, now wound their silent way, bent on their secret errand of destruction and of blood.

In one quarter Reginald, followed by Baptiste, Pierre, and six men, moved swiftly across the prairie, under the guidance of Wingenund, toward the camp of the Osages; in another, Mahega led a numerous band through the defiles to surprise the encampment of the Delawares; while at the latter place

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War-Eagle, aided by Atto and his chosen warriors, was making all the necessary dispositions for a stratagem by which he hoped to defeat the expected attack of his enemies.

It was already several hours past midnight, the moon had withdrawn her light, and Forest-Bird was buried in the refreshing sleep that visits the eyelids of guileless youth; Lita slumbered on a couch of skins stretched across the entrance of her mistress's tent, before which, at a little distance, the Osage sentry, seated by the breastwork thrown up for the defense of the position, hummed a low and plaintive air of his tribe. Suddenly his ear caught the sound of approaching feet, and as quick as thought the arrow was fitted to his bow-string, but he checked the hasty movement, remembering that sentries were posted at the base of the hill, who would not have permitted any hostile steps to approach unchallenged. As the new-comers drew near he distinguished through the gloom the figures of a man and a woman, the former short and square-built, the latter slight and graceful.

"What do the strangers seek?" inquired Toweno, whom Mahega had left in charge of his camp, and who now guarded the tent of Forest-Bird.

"Toweno is a great warrior among the Washashe; his voice is welcome to the ear of a friend," replied, in the Osage tongue, the rough voice of Besha, the horse-stealer, (a well known character among the Crows.) "The Upsaroka maiden wishes to speak with Olitipa, the Great Medicine of the tent."

"This is not a time for maidens to visit or to speak," replied Toweno; "the feet of the braves are on the night path, and many wives who sleep now will be widows ere the sun is up."

"Besha knows it well," answered the horse-stealer: "nor can he understand how Toweno is in the camp while Mahega and his warriors are on the bloody path."

"The pale-faces are cunning," replied the Osage, "and Mahega would not leave the rich skins of otter, beaver, and bison, and the Great Medicine of the tent, without a guard."

"The pale-faces will not come near the high-camp," said Besha, casting a rapid glance over the bales of fur and cloth. "Have you many warriors left with you?"

"Four of the Washashe, and four times four of the Upsa-

roka, is the band in camp—but what does the woman desire of Olitipa?”

“She is the youngest and favorite wife of the Upsaroka chief,” replied Besha, lowering his voice, “and she desires a medicine that his love for her may never change; her heart is good toward the Washashe, and her hands are not empty.” Here he whispered a few words to his companion, and the girl timidly extending her hand, placed in that of the Osage a small roll of tobacco.

The grim features of the warrior relaxed into a smile, as his fingers closed upon the scarce and much coveted leaf, and without further delay he moved to the entrance of the tent, and wakening Lita, desired her to arouse her mistress for a conference with the bride of the Upsaroka chief.

The Crow girl, led by Besha, came forward with apparent reluctance, obviously under the influence of the greatest terror, and Forest-Bird was, for the moment, annoyed at the admission into her tent of a man whom she had only seen once or twice before, and whose appearance was forbidding in the extreme; but quickly remembering that without him it would have been impossible to communicate with her visitor, she desired Lita to place three mats; and seating herself upon one, kindly took the Crow girl by the hand, drawing her gently to that nearest to herself; then motioning to Besha to occupy the third, she requested him, in the Delaware tongue, to explain the object of this nightly visit.

“The tale of the Upsaroka maid is secret,” he replied; “it is only for the ears of Olitipa.”

At a signal from her mistress, Lita, throwing a blanket over her shoulder, stepped into the open air, and leaned against the breastwork not far from the post of Toweno.

“Does the Bending-Willow wish all to be told?” inquired Besha of his companion, in a whisper.

Bending-Willow, who had not yet dared to lift her eyes from the ground, now timidly raised them; and encountering the kind and encouraging glance of Forest-Bird, answered: “Let all be told.”

Having received this permission, the one-eyed horse-stealer proceeded to relate, with more feeling than could have been expected from his harsh and uncouth appearance, the

story of his fair companion. She was the daughter of the principal brave in the nation; both he and his only son had fallen lately in an engagement with the Black-Foots. The father had, with his dying breath, bequeathed his surviving child to the protection of his chief, and the latter had fulfilled the trust by giving her in marriage to his son, a gallant youth, who, although not yet twenty-five years of age, had already two wives in his lodge, and had taken many scalps from the Black-Foots, against whom he was now absent on an expedition undertaken to avenge the slain relations of his newly-espoused bride.

Bending-Willow, who had not yet seen eighteen summers, was passionately fond of her young lord, who now returned her affection with an ardor equal to her own; this had moved the spite and jealousy of his two former wives, who took no pains to conceal their hatred of her; and although they dared not strike or ill-treat her as long as she remained the favorite, they endeavored, by every means in their power, to vex and annoy her, and to bring her, by degrees, under the suspicion and distrust of her husband.

It was to procure from Forest-Bird a medicine by which she might secure his continued affection, that Bending-Willow had made this visit; and she had come stealthily by night, in hopes of escaping thereby the observation of her watchful colleagues.

After a brief silence, Forest-Bird, addressing her visitor through the interpreter, said: "When the wives of the young chief scold and speak bad words to Bending-Willow, what does she reply?"

"She gives them bad words again, harder and sharper than their own," said the bride, hastily.

Forest-Bird shook her head, and continued: "Has Bending-Willow watched their faces when they scold and heap angry words upon her? How do they look then?"

"They look ugly and spiteful as spotted snakes."

"Bending-Willow has come for a medicine to make the love of her husband endure fresh and green as the valleys watered by the Nebraska! Does she think he will love her, if, when he returns, he hears sharp, angry tones in her voice, and sees spiteful looks in her countenance? The Great

Spirit has made her face and voice sweet as the breath of the morning ; if she makes them ugly and harsh, the medicine of Olitipa can not preserve her husband's love."

The Crow bride cast down her eyes, evidently confused and puzzled by this address. At length she inquired, in a subdued tone : " What then is the counsel of Olitipa ? What is Bending-Willow to do when these sharp tongues scold and rail at her ?"

Forest-Bird opened the volume that lay beside her, and answered : " The words of the Great Spirit are : ' A soft answer turneth away anger !' When the tongues of the women are bitter against Bending-Willow, let her give gentle words in reply ; they will be ashamed, and will soon be silent."

" But," said the quick-tempered bride, " the angry spirit gets into the heart of Bending-Willow ; when fire is in the breast, cold water flows not from the tongue !"

" Olitipa will give a medicine to her sister," replied our heroine ; and opening a case that stood near her, she drew thence a small hand-mirror. Presenting this to her visitor, she added : " When Bending-Willow finds the angry spirit in her heart, and bitter words ready on her tongue, let her look at her face in this medicine-glass, and say to herself : ' Are these the soft eyes that the chief loves to look upon ?' "

The bride took the glass and contemplated her features therein, apparently not without satisfaction. But their expression was troubled, for she was frightened at the words which Forest-Bird had told her were those of the Great Spirit, and her eyes wandered from the book to the maiden, as if she would willingly learn more of her mysterious communion with the powers above.

At this crisis the wild war-cry of the Crows rung through the tent ; several shots followed each other in quick succession, followed by the whistling of arrows and the clash of blows, while loud above the din of conflict rose the voice of Toweno, urging and encouraging his men.

Besha started to his feet and rushed from the tent to learn whence came this sudden and unexpected attack, and Lita hastened to the side of her mistress, as if resolved to share her fate, whatever that might be.

Louder and nearer came the mingled cries and yells of bat-

tle, and a stray rifle-ball pierced the canvas of the tent, leaving a rent in it close to the head of Forest-Bird. She neither stirred nor spoke; and as the wailing and terrified Bending-Willow, the daughter and the bride of warriors inured to scenes of blood, looked on the pale, calm cheek of the Christian maiden, whose hand still rested on the mysterious volume, she felt as if in the presence of a superior being, and crept closer to her side for protection and security.

From the beginning of the affray, the terrified Upsaroka bride never moved from the side of our heroine, on whose countenance she fixed her anxious eyes, as if expecting from her some display of supernatural power for their common protection. Lita clung also to the arm of her mistress; and the Christian maiden, trusting to that Word upon which her hand and her heart alike reposed, awaited with patient resignation the issue of a peril of which she knew neither the nature nor the extent. That the camp was attacked she was well aware, by the shouts and cries of the combatants; but who the attacking party might be, and whether likely to fail or to succeed, she had no means of judging.

Besha had, from the commencement of the affray, shot several arrows from the breastwork at the invaders; but seeing them press forward with such determined resolution, he bethought himself of the bride for whose safety he was responsible, and retired within the tent, resolved, if possible to withdraw her from the scene of confusion while there might yet be time for escape; but Bending-Willow obstinately refused to quit the side of Forest-Bird, and he was still urging his entreaties to that effect, when two Osages burst into the tent.

"Let the Medicine-woman of the Bad Spirit die," shouted Toweno, as he raised his tomahawk to strike; but Besha caught the descending blow, and endeavored to avert the murderous weapon from his hold. Meanwhile the other Osage advanced to execute the fell purpose of his leader, when the devoted Lita, throwing herself in his way, clung to his upraised arm with the strength of despair. Slight, however, was the resistance which she could offer; and the savage, throwing her with violence to the ground, again raised his knife above the head of his unresisting victim. Lita shrieked

aloud, and the fate of Forest-Bird seemed inevitable, when a warlike figure burst into the tent, and Reginald Brandon, still wielding the ax of Baptiste, stood in the midst of the group. His fiery glance fell upon the savage about to strike his beloved, and swift as thought that terrible weapon, descending, clove the Indian's skull.

By this time Toweno had freed himself from Besha, whom he had rendered almost helpless by two severe wounds with his scalp-knife, and he now flew at Reginald with the fury of a tiger at bay; but the presence of Forest-Bird nerved her lover's arm with three-fold strength, and parrying the blow which his opponent aimed at his throat, he passed his cutlass through the body of the Osage, and threw him, bleeding and mortally wounded, several yards from the tent. At this moment a shout of triumph without, raised by Baptiste and his companions, assured Reginald that the victory was complete, and that those of the enemy who survived had fled and left him in possession of the camp. Then he cast himself on his knees by the side of his betrothed, and as she leaned her head upon his shoulder, a flood of tears relieved the suppressed emotions caused by the fearful trial that she had undergone. Few and broken were the words that passed between them, yet in those few words what volumes of the heart's grateful and affectionate language were expressed!

The entrance of Baptiste recalled to the recollection of Reginald the duties that still remained for him to perform, while the wounds received by Besha in her defense pleaded with the maiden for such remedies as she had within her power. After briefly explaining to her lover the circumstances which had brought the horse-stealer and his still trembling companion to her tent, she sought her stock of healing ointments and salves; while Reginald, although slightly wounded, went out to arrange with Baptiste and Pierre for the defense of their newly-acquired possession, and to ascertain the loss which his party had sustained. This last was less than he had feared it might prove; and it was with heartfelt pleasure that he shook by the hand young Wingenund, who had recovered from the stunning effects of the blow which he had received, in his gallant attack upon the breastwork.

"Let my young brother go into the tent," said Reginald,

"rest will do him good, and the eyes of Olitipa will be glad to see him."

As the youth turned away, Baptiste added: "Let not the man nor the Crow woman escape; we may want them yet."

Wingenund replied by a sign of intelligence, and entered the compartment of the tent, where he found his sister exercising her office of charity.

We will now go back for a few hours, and see with what success Mahega met, in the expedition which he undertook against the camp of War-Eagle. So confident did he feel in its issue, that he had prevailed upon two-thirds of the fighting-men of the Crows to join his party, promising them abundance of scalps and plunder, as well as revenge for the losses which they had sustained at the hands of Reginald's band. Having already carefully noted all the landmarks on the path by which he meant to make his approach, he followed it with instinctive sagacity, and a few hours' rapid night-march along the base of the hills brought him to the opening of the narrow valley, at the upper extremity of which the enemy's camp was posted. Here they slackened their speed, and advanced in silence with noiseless step, Mahega stealing onward in front, darting his quick glance from side to side, as if he would penetrate the gloom, rendered yet deeper by the trees and rocks beneath which they wound their cautious way. It was not long before he was enabled to distinguish the site of the Delaware camp, by the ruddy glare cast by the watch-fires on the surrounding foliage. The Osage stopped and pointed out the welcome beacon to his followers; not a word was spoken—every warrior there knew the preconcerted plan of attack, and was aware that a careless step upon a dry stick might discover and defeat it. Mahega carried a rifle, and the discharge of it was to be immediately followed by a flight of arrows from his party, after which they were to rush on the surprised foe with battle-ax and tomahawk. Onward moved the dusky band; and it seemed as if fate had given the enemy into their power. Not a deer nor mountain-cat was startled from its lair to give warning of their approach; and at length Mahega succeeded in creeping to the bushy summit of a hillock, whence, at a distance of less than fifty yards, he commanded a view of the camp below.

"For once have the cunning and watchfulness of War-Eagle failed him," said the triumphant Osage to himself, as he loosened the thong of his war-club, and thrust forward the barrel of his rifle.

One by one, his followers crept forward, until they lay in line beside him, behind the crest of the hillock, over which their eager eyes looked down with savage anticipation upon the Delaware camp. The moon had entirely withdrawn her light, and all the scene was wrapt in impenetrable gloom, save where the camp-fires cast a red glare on the bark and branches of the surrounding trees, and on the figures which lay around, enveloped in blanket or bison-robe; no sound disturbed the deep silence of the night, except the nibbling bite of the horses as they cropped the cool grass of the valley below the camp. For a minute Mahega contemplated with fierce delight the helpless condition of his hated foes, then taking deliberate aim at a blanketed form supported against the tree nearest to the fires, he pulled the fatal trigger, and without waiting to see the effect of his shot, he shouted his battle-cry, and sprung forward with his war-club toward the camp. Scarcely had the bullet left his rifle ere the Crows discharged their arrows, each aiming at the figure that he could the most easily distinguish; then they rushed forward to complete the work of destruction with knife and tomahawk.

Leaping into the camp, fifty of the savages were already in the full glare of its fires, when a shrill whistle was heard, and the simultaneous report of a dozen rifles echoed through mountain, forest, and valley.—So near were the marksmen, and so true their aim, that not a bullet failed to carry a death or fatal wound; and the surviving Crows now first ascertained that the figures which they had been piercing were stuffed with grass, and wrapped in blankets or robes so as to resemble sleeping warriors! Great was their terror and dismay; they knew neither the number nor position of their concealed foe, and the master-spirit who had led them, and to whose guidance they trusted for their extrication was nowhere to be seen. Such had been the impetuous haste of the Osage to satisfy his desire for vengeance, that in his rapid descent upon the enemy's camp he had caught his foot in a tough and tan-

gled ground-brier, and had fallen headlong forward. It happened that the very spot where he fell was the post of one of the concealed Delawares, who grappled with him before he could rise to continue his course.

Though taken thus by surprise and at a disadvantage, the fierce Osage lost not for a moment his courage or self-possession; seizing the upraised arm of his antagonist, he wrenched the knife from his grasp, and swift as thought, drove it into the heart of his foe; then tearing off the scalp and suspending it to his belt, he looked upon the scene of confusion and slaughter below. A glance sufficed to show him that he had fallen into the trap that he had prepared for others, and that a continued contest with an enemy armed with rifles, and securely hidden, must be attended with great and unavailing loss. His own person had not yet come within the light of the fires, neither had the groans of the dying Delaware been heard amid the yells of the Crow attack, and the succeeding report of the guns; thus was the Osage enabled to retire unobserved a score of paces into the wood, bearing with him the yet undischarged rifle of the Delaware whom he had slain; then he applied his war-whistle to his lips and blew a loud and shrill recall.

Glad were his faithful followers and the terrified Crows to hear and obey the signal; yet did they not leave the scene without further loss, for ere they got behind the circle around which the camp-fires shed their uncertain light, another volley was fired after them by the enemy; and although none were killed by this second discharge, many were so grievously wounded that they were with difficulty borne off by their companions. It was some relief to them in their hasty retreat to find that they were not pursued. Mahega placed himself in the rear; he even lingered many yards behind the rest, crouching now and then behind tree or bush, in hopes of being able to slake his burning thirst for revenge, but in vain; War-Eagle was too sagacious to pursue by night, in an unknown and broken country, an enemy who, although dismayed and panic-struck, still outnumbered his band in the proportion of three to one.

"Bloody Hand, the great warrior of the Osages, will not come again soon to visit the Lenape camp," said War-Eagle,

in answer to Ethelston's congratulations, as they stood surrounded by their victorious handful of men on the spot whence they had just driven the enemy with so much slaughter. "Let Atto count the dead," continued the chief, "and bring in the wounded, if any are found."

"War-Eagle," said the missionary, who from his concealment had been an unwilling spectator of the late brief but sanguinary skirmish, "forbear to exercise here the cruel usages of Indian war; let the wounded be cared for, and the dead be put to rest in peace below the earth."

"The ears of War-Eagle are open to the Black Father's words," replied the chief, sternly; "if any wounded are found they shall suffer no further hurt: but the scalps of the dead shall hang on the medicine-pole of the Lenape village, that the spirits of Tamenund and his fathers may know that their children have taken vengeance on the forked-tongued Washashe."

Further conversation was interrupted by a cry uttered by Atto, who had found the body of the unhappy Delaware slain by Mahega. The whole party hastened to the spot; and War-Eagle, without speaking a word, pointed to the reeking skull whence the fierce Osage had torn the scalp.

Paul Muller, feeling that all reply would be ill-timed and unavailing, turned away, and walked toward the feeding-place of the horses, while the Delawares scalped, and threw into an adjacent hollow, the bodies of the Crows and Osages who had fallen. Of the latter they counted two, and of the former ten, besides a much greater number whom they knew to have been borne off mortally wounded.

As the missionary strolled onward, accompanied by Ethelston, a low moan caught his ear, and, stooping down, he discerned an Indian coiled up in a position indicative of intense agony under the branches of a juniper. They carried him back to the camp-fire, and on examining him by its light, he proved to be a young Crow warrior, shot through the body, who had dragged himself with difficulty for some distance, and had then fallen exhausted to the ground. Doubtless he expected to be immediately scalped and dispatched; nor could he for some time believe that those into whose hands he had fallen were indeed endeavoring to alleviate his sufferings.

War-Eagle, faithful to his promise, rendered every assistance in his power to the worthy missionary while thus employed; but it might easily be seen, by the scornful curl of his lip, that he looked upon this care of an enemy wounded in battle as an absurd and effeminate practice.

Day broke, and the dispirited band of Crow and Osage warriors returned from their fruitless expedition, only to find a worse disaster at home. Great, indeed, was their dismay, when they were met by a scout from their village, who informed them that a party of white men had stormed the Osage camp by night, and still retained possession of it, having destroyed the greater proportion of those left to defend it. In his description of the attack, the light, the strength, the daring and impetuous courage of the young warrior who had led it, were painted in colors exaggerated by terror; yet the Osage chief had no difficulty in recognizing the hated rival who had struck and disgraced him, and who was now master of the fate of her for whose sake he had toiled, and plotted, and suffered so much.

Stung to the quick by these suggestions of wounded jealousy and pride, he ground his teeth with fury that would not be repressed, and he swore that before two suns had risen and set, either he or his rival, or both, should see the light of day no more. His position was now precarious in the extreme, all his goods and ammunition having fallen into the enemy's hands, excepting that which he and his few remaining followers had about their persons. He knew that if he no longer possessed the means of making presents, the Crows would abandon, if not betray him at once, and he resolved to strike some sudden and decisive blow before that thought should obtain possession of their minds.

The resolve imparted again to his manner its usual fierce and haughty grandeur; and although the Crows loved him not, they could not help looking with a certain awe upon the man who, amid the confusion and panic of the late disastrous attack upon the Delaware camp, had borne away from the victorious enemy the bloody trophy which now hung at his belt, and who, although he had lost by a single blow his lodges, his supplies, and the Great Medicine of the tent, preserved unsubdued the commanding pride of his demeanor.

The success of the stratagem which he now meditated will appear in due season; meanwhile, we must return to the camp of War-Eagle, who began his march at dawn of day, with the view of rejoining Reginald and his band with the least possible delay.

Although he did not anticipate any attempt at reprisals on the part of the Crows, to whom he had just given so severe a lesson, yet he was aware of Mahega's having escaped, and well knew that he would leave untried no schemes for obtaining revenge.

On this account the Delaware chief went forward to the front, taking with him several of his warriors, whom he sent out from time to time to examine the ground, and leaving Atto with Ethelston and Paul Muller to bring up the rear. The latter could not be prevailed upon to abandon the wounded Crow, whom he had placed upon his own horse, which he led by the bridle, while Ethelston supported the sufferer in the saddle.

In this order they had marched for some hours, and the leaders of the band having attained the summit of a ridge, already saw, at no great distance, the encampment of the Crows. Encouraged by the sight, they descended the opposite slope with increased speed, War-Eagle being most anxious to learn the success of Reginald's detachment. The whole band had passed over the summit of the ridge, excepting the small party who escorted the wounded Crow, when the latter grew so faint from the effects of internal bleeding that they were no longer able to keep him in the saddle, and deposited him gently on the grass. The poor fellow pointed to his parched lips, and made an imploring sign for water. Paul Muller, casting his eyes around, saw at a small distance a broken ravine or fissure, in which he hoped that some rain-water might be found, and he desired Atto to hasten thither with all speed.

The Delaware obeyed, and had approached within a few paces of its edge, when an arrow from an unseen enemy pierced him through the breast; and Mahega, leaping from his concealment, killed the brave fellow with his club and attached another Lenape scalp to his belt. He was followed by eight or ten well-armed Crow warriors, who, passing him

while he stooped over his fallen enemy, hastened forward and surrounded Paul Muller, Ethelston and the wounded man. Great was their astonishment at recognizing in the latter a highly-esteemed brave of their own tribe, and greater still at observing that the two white men were so busily engaged in tending and supporting him in his sufferings, as not to have noticed their approach.

When Ethelston became aware of their presence, his first impulse was to lay his hand upon a pistol in his belt; but, with the steady self-possession of true courage, he saw at a glance that he should, by unavailing resistance, only cause the certain death of himself and his peaceable companion; so he continued his attentions to the wounded man, and poured into his mouth the last few drops of a cordial which he had reserved in a leathern flask.

Fresh from the slaughter of the unfortunate Atto, Mahega now came forward, and would have sacrificed the unre-sisting missionary to his blind fury, had not one of the Crow warriors caught his arm, and pointed in an attitude of re-monstrance to his wounded comrade.

The Osage perceived at once that the time was not propitious for his indiscriminate revenge, and contented himself with explaining by signs to his allies that ere long the party now out of sight behind the hill would reappear over its crest in search of their missing companions.

This hint was not lost upon the Crows, who forthwith deprived Ethelston of his arms, and, tying him with a leather thong to the missionary, hurried them along in an oblique direction toward an adjoining thicket, while some of them relieved each other in the care of the dying man.

War Eagle was already far advanced in his descent of the hill on the opposite side, when his progress was arrested by shouts and cries from the rear. On looking round he perceived that these proceeded from Monsieur Perrot, who was waving his arms, and with other gesticulations, indicative of the greatest excitement, calling upon the chief to return.

"Varicle, Varicle, come quick back!"

Although the latter had little regard for the character of the French valet, he saw that something alarming had oc-

curred; and hastening to the spot, scarcely waited to hear his explanation, that "Monsieur Eteiston, de Black Fader and de wounded Corbeau, were not to be seen," but pushed on at once to the top of the hill, over which he had so lately passed.

Casting his anxious eyes around, he looked in vain for the missing members of his party; but he saw at a considerable distance on the back trail the missionary's pony quietly cropping the prairie-grass. Having called one of his men to his side, and given him a few brief instructions, he returned speedily toward the scene of the late catastrophe, and on approaching it, found the scalped and plundered body of Atto, from which the Crows had carried off the arms. Although deeply grieved at the loss of the bravest of his followers, War-Eagle was too much inured to scenes of strife and bloodshed to give way to any emotion save the ardent desire for revenge; and he struck off alone upon the enemy's trail, some of his party following him at a distance.

As he approached the thicket, his attention was caught by a column of smoke ascending from a point near the center of it; and he judged that the band must be very strong, either in their position or in their numbers, if they could have the audacity thus to light a camp-fire, in defiance, as it were, of his pursuit. Influenced by this consideration, he waited until his whole party had come up, when he again moved forward toward the wood, cautiously watching every bush and shrub, in momentary expectation of seeing the enemy start from the covert.

These precautions seemed, however, altogether unnecessary; for he reached unmolested the spot whence he had seen the smoke ascend, and on his arrival found that the fire was consuming the last mortal remains of some human being, whose bones were mingled with its dying embers. This he knew at once to have been the wounded Crow who had expired in the arms of his companions, and to whom they had paid in their retreat this hasty funeral rite, to prevent his body from being liable to any indignities in the event of a pursuit. The quiver and tomahawk of the deceased warrior were suspended by a branch over his funeral-pyre, and War-Eagle turned from the spot in moody, silent meditation. He

felt assured that the retreating party were now too far advanced for him to overtake them, unless he gave up the idea of joining Reginald; and he thought it by no means improbable that this attack had been devised for the purpose of preventing this junction, so important to the safety of both parties; wherefore he resolved to effect it without delay, and afterward to employ all possible means for the recovery of the prisoners.

With this view he returned upon his steps; and having seen the last honors paid to the remains of the faithful Atto, again proceeded in the direction of the Crow camp.

As his little band drew near upon the prairie, it was distinctly visible from both the fortified hills, and some fifty or sixty horsemen galloped out from the higher of the two, with the apparent intention of attacking him; but the steady front presented by the white men and Delawares deterred them from approaching too near the glittering tubes leveled to receive them, and they galloped and wheeled in rapid circles over the prairie, taking care, however, to keep beyond rifle-range. At this juncture the cheering notes of a bugle rose on the air; and Reginald, who had descried his friends, now came down with two men from his little garrison to meet them. The Crows, seeing that further opposition on the open ground was unavailing, retired with threats and yells to their camp; and a few minutes afterward the parties under War-Eagle and Reginald were reunited within the little fortress so hardly won by the latter, who now learned, with unspeakable regret, the capture of Ethelston and Paul Muller, and the death of the brave warrior, Atto.

CHAPTER VII.

BESHA.

It was about a week after the events related in the preceding chapter, that in a deep romantic glen, apparently locked in by impassable mountains, there sat a hunter busily engaged in changing the flint of his rifle, it having just missed fire, and thereby lost him a fine chance of killing a big-horn, or mountain sheep: his countenance expressed little of the disappointment that would have been felt by a younger man on such an occasion, and its harsh, coarse features would have led any observer to believe that their owner was habituated to occupations less generous and harmless than those of the chase.

As he fixed a fresh flint in the lock of his rifle, he hummed, or rather grunted, in a low tone, a kind of chant, which was a mixture of half a score different tunes, and as many various dialects; but from the careless deliberation with which he went on with his work, it was easy to perceive that his mind was otherwise occupied.

Whatever might have been his reflections, they were suddenly interrupted by a hand laid upon his shoulder, which made him start as if he had been stung by a serpent. Springing to his feet, and instinctively dropping the muzzle of his rifle to the breast of his unexpected visitor, he exclaimed, after a momentary pause: "Does Wingenund come as a friend or an enemy?"

"Neither," replied the youth, scornfully. "Wingenund has no friendship for a forked tongue; and if he had come as an enemy, Besha would not now be alive to ask the question; 'twas as easy to shoot him as to touch his shoulder."

"For what then is he come?" inquired the horse-dealer, who, though somewhat abashed at this reproof, was not disposed to endure the tone of superiority assumed toward him by the young Delaware.

"He is come to speak to Besha, and then to return; this is not a place to waste words and time."

"Indeed it is not, for Wingenund knows that his enemies are within hearing of a rifle-shot."

"There may be other rifles, nearer than Besha thinks," replied the youth, dryly. "Wingenund is not a bird; wherever he goes his friends can follow him."

The horse-dealer cast an uneasy glance around, and muttered half-aloud: "If Wingenund is not a bird, I know not how he came to this place unseen by the Upsaroka scouts, who are abroad in every quarter."

To this Wingenund deigned no reply, but entered at once into the business upon which he had come. As he explained his proposal, the single eye of his auditor seemed to dilate with unfeigned astonishment, and at its conclusion he shook his head, saying: "It can not be! the mad-spirit has entered my young brother's head. Besha would do much to serve his friends, but this would hold a knife to the cord of his own life!"

"The knife is already there," said the youth, sternly: "Besha has told lies to Netis and to War-Eagle, and unless he makes his first words good their knife or bullet shall find him on the mountain or in the wood, or in the midst of the Upsaroka camp."*

For an instant Besha was tempted to rush on the bold speaker and trust the issue to his superior strength; but the quiet eye of the young Delaware was fixed upon him with an expression so fearless, and resolved, that he involuntarily quailed before it; and as he was endeavoring to frame some further excuse, the youth continued in a tone of voice less stern: "Let Besha's ears be open, it is not yet too late; if he chooses to be friends with Netis, Wingenund can tell him some news that will be good for the person whom he loves best."

"And who may that be?" said the horse-dealer, doubtless surprised at the youth's pretending to a knowledge of his affections.

"Himself," was the brief reply.

The horse-dealer's eyes twinkled with a comic expression, and a broad grin sat upon his countenance. "Supposing

*Besha had escaped with Bending-Willow on a promise of exchanging her for the white prisoner, and had broken his word.

that my young brother's words are true what is the good news he has to tell?"

"If the white prisoners are given back unhurt to their friends, the lodge of Besha shall be more full of gifts than any lodge on the banks of the great southern river; if not, the mountain wolves shall gnaw his bones before the change of another moon: let him choose for himself."

"My brother's words are big," answered the horse-dealer, striving to overcome the effect produced upon him by the threat of the Delaware youth. "The tongues of women are very brave; if the Washashe tell the truth, not many summers have passed since the Lenape were a woman-people."

The blood of the young chief boiled within him at this insulting allusion to an era in the history of his tribe, which has already been explained to the reader; and had he followed his first fierce impulse, he would instantly have avenged the affront in the blood of the speaker; but he never lost sight of the object for which he had so long sought an interview with the horse-dealer; wherefore he controlled his rising passion, and replied: "Wingenund comes with this message from those who not many days ago drove the Washashe and Upsaroka from their strong camp: Besha may judge whether they are women or warriors."

The horse-dealer felt, if he did not own, the justice of the reproof; he knew also that the greater portion of the coveted goods were in the possession of War-Eagle's party, and he was willing enough to conciliate them, provided he could insure a retreat from the anger of the Crows, in the event of his intrigue being discovered by them.

Moved by these considerations, he said, in an undecided tone, "My young brother must not forget that the edge of the knife is on the cord of his life; if Besha agrees to his proposal, and the Crows discover him, he will be torn in pieces like a wounded elk among wolves."

"The life of Wingenund is like the breath of the mountain breeze," answered the youth; "it is in the hands of the Great Spirit, to move and send it whither he pleases. Let Besha taste this black-water," he added, drawing from his belt a small bottle; "it is very wonderful."

The horse-dealer took the vial, which contained a strong,

and not very palatable mixture, which had been borrowed by Wingenund from his sister's chest of medicine; but he declined tasting it, shaking his head in a manner that gave the youth to understand that he suspected something of a hurtful or poisonous nature.

"Let not Besha be afraid," said the youth, scornfully; "the tomahawk and the rifle are the death-weapons of the Lenape they war not with bad waters!" and as he spoke he drank a portion of the dark and distasteful liquid.

It would now have been held, according to Indian custom, an act of unpardonable cowardice in Besha had he any longer hesitated to taste the pledge; and whatever doubts or scruples he might in secret have entertained, he concealed them, and drank off the remaining contents of the vial.

As soon as he had swallowed them, the youth, pointing up to the sky, said, with much solemnity, "Now Wingenund and Besha are before the Great Spirit, and they must beware what they do. This dark-water was given into their hands by the Medicine of the white tent; it is made up by Forest-Bird from a thousand unknown herbs; it is harmless to the good, but it is poison to the forked tongue! Has Besha ever heard of the sickness which makes the skin like a honeycomb; which spares neither woman, warrior, nor child; and in the course of half a moon turns a powerful tribe into a feeble and exhausted band?"

"He *has* heard of it," replied the horse-dealer, trembling from head to foot at this allusion to that *fell disease*,* which had already begun its fearful ravages among the Indian nations, and has since fulfilled to the very letter the description given to it by the Delaware youth. Its origin and causes were unknown, its cure beyond their skill; it is not therefore to be wondered at if they looked upon it with a mysterious dread.

"Yes," continued Wingenund, "if truth is on the lips and in the heart of Besha, the medicine-water will be good for him and make him strong. If he thinks of falsehood, and lies spring up in his heart, but he overcome the bad spirit within, and treads it under his foot, then will the medicine-water give him pain for a short time, but he will recover

* Small-pox.

and be stronger than before; and if his lips and heart continue full of deceit, diseases and sores shall come so thick upon his skin that he shall die among these rocks—the hungry wolf and the turkey-buzzard shall refuse to come near the polluted carcass.”

Such, or nearly such, was the warning threat which the youth held forth in the bold and figurative language of his tribe; and although Besha could not with justice be called a coward, and was superior to many of the superstitions of the Indian nations, still he had heard such well-authenticated accounts of the miraculous power of the Great Medicine of the tent, that the words of Wingenund produced all, and more than all, the effect he had anticipated.

“It shall be done,” said Besha, in a subdued tone; “let Wingenund tell Olitipa that the lips and the heart of her friend will be true, and let him desire her to speak to the Great Spirit, that the medicine-water may not hurt him. Besha will be true; if the Crows discover and kill Wingenund, the hands of Besha shall be clear of his blood.”

“Let the words of Wingenund remain in Besha’s ears; let his tongue and his path be straight, and the hearts and hands of the Lenape will be open to him. At two hours after night-fall Wingenund will be here again.”

So saying, the youth turned; and darting through some low bushes, clambered up the steep and rocky bed of a mountain-torrent with the activity of a mountain-cat.

The horse-dealer shouldered his rifle, and returned to the Crow camp, revolving schemes for insuring the gratitude of the Delawares, without forfeiting the friendship of those with whom he was allied.

Wingenund had rightly estimated the probable nature and quality of his reflections, and sundry sharp twitches which he felt in his stomach, served to remind him of the dangerous liquid which it contained. Warned by these sensations, he made up his mind to obey the Great Medicine of the tent, and for the present at least, to be faithful to the promise made to Wingenund.

The Delaware youth pursued his way up the rough and craggy gorge until he reached a cave that he had noticed on his descent as likely to afford shelter and a secure retreat.

Here he stopped ; and ensconcing himself in a dark recess, whence he could, without being himself discovered, see any one passing before the aperture, he threw himself on the ground, and drawing from his belt a few slices of dried bison-meat, he made his frugal meal, and quenched his thirst from a streamlet that trickled down the face of the rock behind him. While resting himself, he indulged in hopes and reveries suited to his enthusiastic nature ; he was now engaged in an enterprise such as he had often heard recorded in the songs of the Lenape warriors ; he was about to trust himself alone in the midst of a hostile camp, and to risk his life for the liberation of his early benefactor and the friend of his adopted brother ; he felt the spirit of his fathers stir within his breast.

"If I escape," said he to himself, "they shall escape with me ; and if I die, I will not die alone, and the name of Wingenund shall not be forgotten among the warriors of his tribe."

In these and similar meditations he beguiled the hours until darkness overspread the earth, and the time of the appointed rendezvous drew nigh ; then, once more emerging from the cave, he picked his way cautiously among the rocks, and at length found himself at the spot where he had parted from Besha. Having purposely concealed his rifle in the cave, he was now armed only with a knife and a small pistol, which he carried in his belt.

He had not waited long when he heard the sound of approaching footsteps, and straining his keen sight to its utmost power, he recognized Besha, who came not alone, but accompanied by another man.

Although this was an addition to the company that he did not expect, the youth came fearlessly forward, his quick apprehension suggesting to him that if treachery had been intended, the horse-dealer's companion would have been concealed. After exchanging a sign of recognition Wingenund led the way to a deep recess which he had noted in a rock at no great distance, where they collected and kindled a few sticks of withered juniper and sage, which supplied them with warmth and light without rendering the place of their colloquy visible from the valley below.

By the light of the fire Wingenund observed with surprise

that the horse-dealer's companion, a lad of nearly his own size and stature, had only one eye, the cavity of the other being covered with a patch of cloth; his complexion was of a hue so swarthy, that it evidently contained an admixture of the negro race; and his hair, though not woolly, was coarse, long, and matted, differing entirely in its texture from that of the tribes of purely Indian blood. He was wrapped in a tattered blanket, and stood apart, like one conscious of his inferiority of station. To account for his appearance without entering at length into the explanations given by the horse-dealer to Wingenund, it will be sufficient to state that the latter had proposed to enter the Crow camp in a female dress, and to find an opportunity as an inmate of his lodge, for communicating with Paul Muller and Ethelston.

As soon as Besha once made up his mind to forward the scheme, he resolved to do so with as little risk of discovery as possible. Happening to have in his lodge a slave, a captive taken in a horse-stealing skirmish among the Comanches, who was nearly the same age as Wingenund, he thought that the youth might personate him more easily than he could imitate the gait and appearance of a woman.

Wingenund saw at once the drift of Besha's project, and they lost no time in carrying it into effect. The exchange of dress was made in a few seconds, and the horse-dealer then drew from his pouch a small bladder containing ointment, with which he stained the youth's hands and face, fastening at the same time a patch over his left eye. Wingenund then desired Besha to walk up and down, and speak with the lad, that he might carefully note his movements, and the intonation of his voice. This observation he continued for some time, until he thought himself tolerably perfect in his lesson. There remained, however, one point on which he still felt himself very insecure against detection. On his explaining this to Besha, the latter grinned, and drawing from under his vest a head-dress of false hair, ragged and matted as that of his slave, he placed it on the head of Wingenund. The youth felt his disguise was now complete; and retaining his own knife and small pistol in his belt, threw the tattered blanket over his shoulder, and prepared to accompany Besha to his lodge.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE GRIZZLY.

WHEN War-Eagle's band arrived in the mountains, it became necessary to hunt for food, and Reginald started after mountain sheep leaving Forest-Bird in the care of his Indian brother.

Shortly afterward Forest-Bird set forth, taking in her hand a moccasin, which she was ornamenting with stained quills for the foot of Reginald, and accompanied by her faithful Lita, who bore upon her head a bundle containing various articles belonging to her mistress and to herself, and on which she was about to exercise her talents as a laundress.

They had pursued their respective avocations for several hours without interruption, when on a sudden they heard the report of a rifle and the voice of a man shouting, as if engaged in the pursuit of game. This was an occurrence to which both were so much accustomed, that they paid at first little attention to it; but they felt some alarm when they saw one of their party, a white hunter, coming toward them as if running for his life. Before reaching the spot where they were seated, he threw his rifle upon the ground, and climbed into a tree; immediately afterward a young male, not fullgrown, of the species called the grizzly or Rocky Mountain bear, came up, limping as if wounded by the rifle so lately discharged, and missing the object that he had been following, looked around him, howling with mingled rage and pain. At length he caught sight of Forest-Bird and her companion; and setting up a more loud and angry howl, trotted toward them. Unfortunately, the spot to which they had retired was a narrow strip of wooded ground, projecting into a curve of the stream above mentioned, and they could not retreat toward the camp without approaching yet nearer to the wounded bear. There was no time for reflection; and in the sudden emergency, Forest-Bird hesitated whether she should not adopt the desperate alternative of throwing herself

into the water, in hopes that the stream might carry her out of the reach of danger.

At this crisis the crack of a rifle was heard, and the young bear fell, but again rose and struggled forward, as if determined not to be disappointed of its prey. Seeing the imminent danger of the woman, the hunter who had climbed the tree dropped lightly to the ground, and catching up his rifle, attacked the half-exhausted animal, which still retained sufficient strength to render too near an approach extremely dangerous. War-Eagle—for he it was who had fired the last opportune shot—now sprung forward from the bushes, reloading his rifle as he came, in order to decide the issue of the conflict, when a loud shriek from Lita reached his ear; and on turning round he beheld the dam of the wounded cub, a she-bear of enormous bulk, trotting rapidly forward to the scene of action; the hunter was so much engaged in dealing blow after blow with the butt of his rifle, that he had noticed neither her approach nor the warning shout of War-Eagle, when one stroke from her powerful paw struck him bleeding and senseless to the ground. For an instant she smelt and moaned over her dying offspring; then, as if attracted by the female dress, pursued her way with redoubled speed and fury toward the spot where Lita clung, with speechless terror, to the arm of her mistress. The latter, although fully alive to the imminency of the peril, lost not her composure at this trying moment. Breathing a short prayer to Heaven for support and protection, she fixed her eyes upon War-Eagle, as if conscious that the only human possibility of safety now lay in his courage and devotion.

Then it was that the Indian chief evinced the high and heroic properties of his character; for although every second brought the infuriated brute near and more near to her who had been from youth his heart's dearest treasure, he continued, as he advanced, to load the rifle with a hand as steady as if he had been about to practice at a target; and just as the ball was rammed home, and the priming carefully placed in the pan, he threw himself directly in front of the bear, so that it was only by first destroying him that she could possibly approach the objects of his care. It was a moment, and but a morient of dreadful suspense, for the bear swerved

neither to the right nor to the left from her onward path ; and it was not until the muzzle of the rifle was within three yards of her forehead that he fired, taking his aim between her eyes ; shaking her head as if more angered than hurt, she raised her huge form on her hind legs and advanced to seize him, when he drew his pistol and discharged it into her chest, springing at the same time lightly back, almost to the spot to which Forest-Bird and her trembling companion seemed rooted as if by a spell. Although both shots had struck where they were aimed, the second appeared to have taken no more effect than the first, and the bear was again advancing to the attack, when War-Eagle, catching up from the ground a blanket which Lita had brought down to the brook, held it extended before him until the monster sprung against it, and with her claws rent it into shreds ; not, however, before it had served for an instant the purpose of a vail ; profiting by this opportunity, the heroic Delaware dashed in between her fore-paws and plunged his long knife into her breast. Short, though terrible, was the struggle that ensued ; the bear was every moment growing weaker from the effect of the shot wounds, and from loss of blood, and though she lacerated him dreadfully with her claws and teeth, she was not able to make him relax the determined grasp with which he clung to her, plunging the fatal knife again and again into her body, until at length she fell exhausted and expiring into a pool of her own blood, while the triumphant war-cry of the Delaware rung aloud through wood and vale.

Alarmed by the shots, the yells of the dying bear, and the shouts of the chief, several of the party now hastened toward the scene of action ; but, before they could reach it, Reginald Brandon, who was just returning into camp with the results of a successful chase, caught the mingled sounds, and outstripping all his companions, arrived panting and breathless on the spot. For a moment he gazed on the strange and fearful spectacle that met his view. The Delaware chief, supporting his head upon his hand, still reclined against the body of his grim antagonist, his countenance calm in its expression, but both his face and his whole form covered with recent blood ; at his feet lay Lita, perfectly unconscious, and sprinkled with the same crimson stream ; while at his side

knelt Forest-Bird, breathing over her heroic preserver the fervent outpourings of a grateful heart! Another moment, and Reginald was beside her; he understood instinctively all that had passed, and no sooner had ascertained that his betrothed was safe and unhurt, than he turned with affectionate solicitude to inquire into the condition of his friend.

"Olitipa is safe and War-Eagle is happy," replied the chief.

By this time the Delawares were all gathered around their beloved leader, and in obedience to an order which he gave in a low voice, one of them threw a blanket over his torn and blood-stained dress, while another brought from the stream a bowl of fresh water, which Forest-Bird took from the messenger, and held to his parched lips; then, wetting a cloth, she washed the blood from his face, cooled his hot brow, and inquired, in a tone of sisterly affection, whether he found himself recruited and refreshed.

"The hand of Olitipa is medicine against pain, and her voice brings comfort!" replied the chief, gently. "War-Eagle is quite happy."

Not so were those around him. His stern warriors stood in sad, unbroken silence; the features of the hardy guide worked with an emotion that he strove in vain to conceal, for he knew that the Delaware would not have retained his sitting posture by the carcass of the bear, had not his wounds been grievous and disabling; Reginald Brandon held the hand of his friend, unable to speak, save a few broken words of affection and gratitude: while Forest-Bird found at length relief for her oppressed heart in a flood of tears. So much engrossed were they all by their own feelings, that none seemed to notice the anguish of Lita, who still lay in a pool of blood at the feet of him she had long and secretly loved, giving no further signs of life than a succession of smothered wailings and groans that escaped from her unconscious lips.

The only countenance among those present that retained its unmoved composure was that of the chief himself; and a bright ray shot from his dark eye when one of the bravest of his warriors laid down before him the claws of the huge bear

and her cub, which he had cut off according to custom, and now presented as a trophy of victory.

Baptiste and Pierre having conferred together for a few minutes, the former whispered to Reginald Brandon that Forest-Bird and Lita should be withdrawn for a short time, while War-Eagle's wounds were examined, and his real condition ascertained. Agreeably to this suggestion, Reginald led his betrothed weeping from the spot. Some of the Delawares and hunters removed Lita; but not without difficulty, as she still clung with frantic energy to the torn garments of the chief; and, as they bore her away, they now for the first time observed that she had received some severe scratches in her fruitless endeavor to rescue him from the struggles of the dying bear.

When all had retired to some distance, and there remained only by the Delaware his oldest warriors, Pierre and Baptiste, the latter gently lifted the blanket from the shoulders of the wounded man, saying: "Let my brother allow his friends to see the hurts which he has received, that they may endeavor to relieve or heal them."

The chief nodded his assent; but no sign, save the dew that stood upon his brow, betrayed the agony and exhaustion that he endured. When the tattered remnants of his hunting-dress were removed, a spectacle so terrible was presented to the eyes of the guide, that even his iron nerves could not endure it, and, covering his face with his hands, he groaned aloud, while the exclamation, "*Dieu de la miséricorde!*" broke from his lips in the language that he had been first taught to speak.

The left arm of the chief was bitten through and through, and so dreadfully mangled that no skill of surgery could restore it: the shoulders and chest had been lacerated by the fore-paws, some of the wounds being wide and gaping, as if made by a saw or hatchet; these might possibly, however, yield to time and careful treatment; but the injuries that he had received in the lower part of the body were such as to leave no hope of recovery, for the bear, in her last dying struggles, had used the terrible claws of her hind feet with such fatal effect, that the lacerated entrails of the sufferer protruded through the wound.

Baptiste saw at a glance that all was over, and that any attempt at closing the wounds would only cause additional and needless pain. War-Eagle watched his countenance, and reading there a verdict that confirmed his own sensations, gave him his hand and smiled. The rough woodsman wrung it with ill-dissembled emotion, and turned away his head that his Indian friend might not see the moisture that gathered in his eye.

A brief consultation now ensued, during which it was arranged that the carcasses of the bears should be carried away, and the wounded chief gently moved to a soft, grassy spot a few yards distant, where his wounds might be so far dressed and bandaged as to prevent further effusion of blood. It was also agreed that the tent and the lodges should be brought to the spot, so that he might receive all the care and attention that his desperate case admitted.

These arrangements having been made, Baptiste walked slowly toward the place where the rest of the party awaited in deep anxiety the result of his report. As he drew near with heavy, lingering steps, and his weather-beaten countenance overspread with gloom, they saw too well the purport of his message, and none had courage enough to bid him speak. Forest-Bird clung to the arm of Reginald for support; the Delawares leaned upon their rifles in silence; and even the rough hunters of the prairie wore an aspect of sadness that contrasted strongly with their habitual bold and reckless bearing.

Recovering his composure by a powerful effort, the guide looked gravely around him as soon as he reached the center of the semicircle in which he stood, and addressing himself first to Reginald and the white men, said: "There is no cure for the wounds of the Delaware; were the Black Father himself among us, his skill and his medicine would be in vain." Then turning to the Delawares, he added in their own tongue: "The sun of the Lenape chief is setting. The Great Spirit has sent for him, and he must obey: let his warriors gather round him to smooth his path through the dark valley."

Having thus spoken, the guide hastened to carry into effect the arrangements above mentioned, and in a short time

the little camp was moved to the spot where the Delaware reclined against the stump of a withered alder, over which his followers had already thrown some blankets and buffalo-robes to soften his couch. Hither was brought the tent of Forest-Bird, which was so pitched that the outer compartment might shelter the wounded chief, and might afford to Reginald and Forest-Bird the means of watching him constantly, and administering such relief in his extremity, as was within their power.

Lita's energies, both of mind and body, seemed entirely paralyzed: she neither wept nor sobbed, but sat in a corner of the tent, whence she gazed intently, yet with a vacant expression, upon the sufferer.

He alone of the whole party maintained throughout a dignified and unmoved composure; nor could either the pangs he endured, or the certain prospect of a lingering death, draw from him a word of complaint. He smiled gratefully as Forest-Bird from time to time raised the refreshing cup of water to his lips, or wiped away the drops which weakness and agony wrung from his forehead. Once, and once only, did a look of gloom and discontent pass over his countenance.

Reginald observing it, took his hand and inquired: "Is there a dark thought in my brother's heart, let him speak it?"

"There is," replied the chief, with stern energy; "Mahega, the bloody-hand—the Washashe wolf—the slayer of my tribe, he lives, and War-Eagle must go to the hunting-fields of the brave, and when his fathers say to him, 'Where is the scalp of Mahega?' his tongue will be silent, and his hands will be empty."

"His hands will not be empty," replied Reginald, breathing his own impassioned feelings in the figurative language of his friend. "His hands will not be empty; he can show the scalps of many enemies; he may tell the ancient people that he was the war-chief of their race, that neither Washashe nor Dahcotah ever saw his back; and that, to save his sister's life he gave his own. Where is the warrior who would not envy the fame of War-Eagle, and who would not rejoice in the glory of such a death?"

These words, and the tone of earnest feeling in which they were spoken, touched the right chord in the heart of the

chief; he pressed the hand of his friend, and a smile of triumph shot across his features like a sunbeam breaking through the thick darkness of a thunder-cloud.

CHAPTER IX.

WINGENUND'S TRIUMPH.

WE must pass over the adventures of Wingenund in the Crow camp, in the character of the one-eyed slave of Besha. The reader may well suppose that it needed all his ingenuity to avoid discovery. He did so however, and contrived to open communication with Ethelston and the missionary, and to engage the good-natured Bending-Willow as his friend.

One day, as he was lounging in the vicinity of the camp, revolving plans of escape, he came to a stream that fell from the rocks above, lending a greener freshness to the narrow strip of grass through which it flowed. His attention was arrested by a recent footmark upon its margin. Starting with surprise, he stooped to examine it more carefully; it was plain and distinct, so that a less sagacious eye than his might have traced its form and dimensions. A single look satisfied him, and as he rose from his scrutiny, the name of Mahega escaped from his lips.

Without a moment's hesitation he resolved to follow the trail of the Osage, and observe his movements, conjecturing that these probably boded no good to the Delaware party, although he felt at some loss to imagine what object could lead him to a quarter almost immediately opposite to that where they were encamped.

Wingenund had followed the trail for several hours, when he caught a distant view of a slight column of smoke rising from a dell, the bottom of which was concealed by intervening heights. One of these, more rugged and lofty than the rest, lay at his right hand, and he climbed with some difficulty to the top of it, in hopes of being able thence to descry the spot whence the smoke arose. Neither was he disappointed

in this expectation, for on reaching the hight, he could see into the deep bosom of the mountain glen, where he clearly discerned a large body of men and horses, assembled round a fire; carefully noting the nature of the intervening ground, he re-descended the hill, and again threw himself upon the trail of the Osage, which continued, as he expected, to lead him in the direction of the unknown band.

As he advanced he felt the necessity of using the greatest caution lest he should inadvertently come within sight of any scouts or stragglers from the valley below; but fortune and his own skill so far favored his approach, that he reached unperceived a point whence he could more clearly see the circle assembled round the fire, and could distinguish the horses and the men sufficiently to ascertain that they belonged to some mountain tribe bent on a war excursion, as they had with them neither their women nor their lodges. With awakened curiosity and interest, the youth now crept to a spot at a little distance, where a confused pile of huge stones, here and there overgrown with stunted shrubs, offered a sheltered retreat, whence, without being himself seen, he could observe all that passed below. In making his way to the place he was somewhat surprised to find what might also be called a beaten path, upon which the recent tracks of men and horses, as well as of bison, were clearly discernible.

He had scarcely time to conceal himself, when he perceived two men coming directly toward his hiding-place, in one of whom he recognized the Osage chief, while the other belonged apparently to some tribe of Indians that he had never seen before. They came slowly up the path before mentioned, stopping almost at every step, and conversing in the language of signs, by which means their expressions of mutual friendship were as intelligible to the quick-witted youth, as they were to each other. The stranger was a fine-looking Indian, and though lower in stature than his gigantic companion, had the appearance of great muscular strength, and his dress betokened, according to Indian notions of magnificence, a chief of high degree. His black hair was clubbed behind his head, and fastened with several painted feathers bound with fillets of ermine; his hunting-shirt was of the skin of the mountain goat, and both it and his deer-skin leggings were ornamented

with porcupine-quills, and fringed with the scalp-locks of enemies slain in battle; he carried in his hand a long lance decorated with scalp-locks, and at his back hung a quiver made from the skin of the panther, in which bristled a score of arrows beautifully tipped with sharp flint, and attached to it by a leather thong was a bow so short, that it looked more like the plaything of a boy than the deadly weapon of a warrior.

Wingenund wondered to what tribe the stranger might belong; and as the two Indians seated themselves upon a fragment of rock only a few yards from the recess in which he was ensconced, he trusted that some signal would pass by which his curiosity might be afterward satisfied; at all events, it seemed clear that they were already upon the best terms with each other, for they smiled and grinned, each placing a hand upon the heart of the other, after which Mahega extended his arms like a flying bird, and then passed his right hand with a rapid movement round his own scalp: from which sign the youth instantly knew that their plot was to attack and kill the Upsarokas.

"Double-tongued, cowardly snake!" said Wingenund to himself, "he made a league with the Dahcotahs to destroy his Lenape friends, and now he makes one with a stranger tribe to destroy those with whom he eats and smokes."

That the youth rightly conjectured the object of the interview he could no longer doubt, when Mahega, pointing directly to the valley where the Crows were encamped, repeated again the signals for attack and slaughter. Not a word passed during this time, excepting when the stranger drew from under his hunting-shirt a small whistle, made apparently either from a bone or a reed, and quaintly ornamented with stained quills and the down from the breast of some mountain bird; having applied this to his lips, he drew from it a peculiar sound, not remarkable for its shrillness, but different from any tone that Wingenund remembered to have heard before.

After two or three attempts, Mahega succeeded in sounding it correctly; and nodding intelligently to the stranger, concealed it carefully in his belt; they then exchanged the names or war-cry, by which they were to recognize each other, Mahega teaching his new friend to say "*Washashe*," and learning

in return to pronounce "*Kain-na*," which he repeated three or four times so distinctly, that Wingenund caught and remembered it. These preparatory civilities having passed, they proceeded to the interchange of presents, by which their alliance was to be cemented.

Mahega drew from his girdle a pistol, which he gave, together with a small leather pouch containing lead and powder, to the stranger chief, who received it with an air so puzzled and mysterious, that Mahega could scarcely refrain from smiling. He turned the pistol over and over, looking down the barrel, and examining the lock with a curiosity that he cared not to conceal; he pointed it, however, toward a mark in an adjoining rock, and made a sound with his lips, which was intended to imitate its report, repeating at the same time the word "*sachsi-nama*," as if to show that the name and use of the weapon were not strange to him although he might never have seen one before. Mahega then proceeded to show him how to use it, making signs that with it he might kill all his enemies; and upon the stranger expressing a wish to see an instance of its power, he placed a thin flat stone at the distance of a few yards, and split it in two at the first shot; after which he reloaded it, showing at the same time the use of the priming pan and trigger.

It was not without a look of gratified pride that he placed the pistol in his belt, repeating again and again, "*sachsi-nama*," "*nahtovi-nama*." He then unslung the short bow that hung at his back, and presented it, with the panther-skin quiver full of arrows, to the Osage chief, who received the gift with every appearance of satisfaction, and they parted, the former returning toward the encampment of his tribe, after he had told Mahega that the name of the bow was "*nutsi-nama*."

For some time after the departure of his new ally, the Osage remained upon his seat examining the bow, which at first sight he had considered a mere toy, but which he found to his astonishment, required all his force to draw it to its full power. Being formed of bone, strengthened throughout with sinew, it was stiff and elastic to an extraordinary degree; and although not more than three feet in length, would drive an arrow as far as an ordinary six-feet bow.

When he had sufficiently examined his new acquisition, it

occurred to the chief that he could not, without risk of detection, carry it into the Crow camp. He resolved, therefore, to hide it in a dry cleft of the rock, and take it out again after the issue of his plot should be decided.

This resolution threatened to bring about an unexpected catastrophe, as it happened that he approached the very recess in which Wingenund was stationed. Drawing the knife from his belt, the youth stood in the inmost corner of the cavern, ready, as soon as discovery became inevitable, to spring upon his powerful enemy; but fate had otherwise decreed, and the Osage passed on to a higher and narrower cleft, where he deposited the quiver and the bow, carefully closing the aperture with moss and lichen.

It was not until he had gone some distance on his homeward way, that Wingenund emerged from his hiding-place, and having possessed himself of the quiver and the bow, returned slowly upon the Osage's trail toward the Upsaroka camp, proving as he went the surprising strength of the weapon, and admiring the straightness and beauty of the war-arrows with which the quiver was supplied.

Following unperceived, and at some distance, the steps of the Osage, he found that the latter took a shorter, though a somewhat steeper and more rugged way than that by which he had come; so that very little more than two hours of brisk walking brought him within sight of the watch-fires of the Upsaroka camp, just as day closed, and their light began to shine more brightly through the valley. Availing himself of the shelter of a stunted pine, the youth lay down for some time, and did not re-enter the camp until late at night, when he made his way without interruption to Besha's tent, giving to the outposts by whom he was challenged the countersign taught him by the horse-dealer.

On the following morning, before sunrise, Besha was aroused by Wingenund, who told him that he had news of great importance to communicate to the Crow chiefs, and that no time should be lost before they were summoned to council. The horse-dealer rubbed his eyes, as he awakened by degrees, and listened to this intelligence, which he suspected at first to be some trick on the part of the youth for the liberation of his friends; but there was an earnest simpli-

city in his manner that carried conviction with it ; and Besha endeavored, as he threw on his hunting-shirt, and fastened his belt, to learn from the youth the nature and purport of his intelligence. The latter seemed, however, to be in no very communicative mood ; he merely replied, " Wingenund speaks not the Upsaroka tongue ; let Besha repeat to the council word after word what he hears, that will be enough ; he will serve both the Crows and the Delawares, and will obtain thanks and presents from both. Let Mahega, too, be called to attend the council."

The horse-dealer having departed upon his errand, Wingenund found an opportunity to detail briefly to Paul Muller and Ethelston the discovery that he had made on the preceding evening ; but it may well be imagined that he could obtain from neither any information respecting the mountain-tribe with whom the Osage was carrying on his treacherous intrigue.

" Let my son boldly speak the truth," said the missionary, " and leave the result to God."

" Wingenund never told a lie," said the young Delaware ; and the bright, fearless expression of his countenance warranted the proud assertion. _____

The spectacle that met their view when they issued from the lodge was striking and picturesque ; runners had been sent throughout the camp, and all the principal chiefs, braves, and medicine-men were already assembled in a semicircle, the concave center of which was formed by the lodge of White-Bull and his father, the latter of whom had put on for the occasion a magnificent head-dress of painted eagle-feathers which betokened his rank as head-chief of the band. The horse-dealer stood in front of his own lodge to the left, and frequent were the glances directed to him from all quarters, it having been generally understood that the council was summoned to consider matters brought forward by him. Behind him stood Wingenund, wrapped in a loose blanket, which partially concealed his features and covered entirely the rest of his person ; on the opposite wing of the circle, and at a distance of twenty-five or thirty yards, stood Mahega, his gigantic stature shown off to the best advantage by

the warlike dress which he had put on complete for the solemn occasion, his neck and arms being covered with beads of various colors, and his fingers playing unconsciously with the weighty iron-pointed mace or war-club, which had slain so many of those whose scalp-locks now fringed his leathern shirt and hose. The warriors and other Indians of inferior degree stood in the back-ground, and some, anxious to get a better view of what was going forward, had perched themselves upon the adjoining rocks and cliffs, where their dusky forms, dimly seen through the mists which were now vanishing before the beams of the rising sun, gave a wild and picturesque effect to the scene.

Nearly half an hour was consumed by the soothsayers or medicine-men in going through their formal mummeries, to ascertain whether the hour and occasion were favorable for the proposed business, and it was not until the medicine-pipe had been passed round, and the chief functionary had turned gravely to the north, south, east and west, blowing to each quarter successively a whiff of medicine smoke, that he gave his permission for the council to proceed with its deliberations.

During all this time a profound silence reigned throughout the camp, the women suspending their scolding, chattering and domestic avocations, and even the children peeping, half-frightened, from behind their mothers, or stealing away to some spot where they might laugh and play without fear of being whipped for disturbing the solemnities.

The venerable father of White-Bull now returned the great pipe to the medicine-men, saying, in a voice distinctly audible throughout the circle: "Besha has called the chiefs and braves of the Upsaroka together; they are come—their ears are open—let the one-eyed man, who brings horses from the far prairies, speak with a single tongue."

Thus called upon, the horse-dealer stepped forward, saying: "Besha is neither wise in council, nor a chief among warriors; he has traveled far among the eastern tribes, and he knows their tongues; he stands here to give out of his mouth what goes in at his ear. Let the Upsaroka warriors listen; they are not fools, they will soon know if lies are told to them. Let them look at this youth; his blanket is

that of Besha's slave ; he is not what he seems ; he is a son of the Lenape, a friend of the whites ; yet he has come alone into the camp to show to the Upsaroka that a snake is crawling among their lodges."

A murmur ran through the assembly as Besha pronounced these words, and pointed to Wingenund, who, throwing the blanket into the hollow of his left arm, advanced to the front, and with a slight inclination to the old chief, awaited his permission to proceed.

The youth, the graceful form, the open countenance, and the dignified bearing of Wingenund, as he stood forward in the assembled circle, prepossessed the Crows strongly in his favor, and they awaited with excited curiosity the intelligence that he had to communicate ; but the chief did not appear disposed to gratify their impatience, for after whispering a few words to a messenger who stood beside him, he relapsed into silence, scanning with a fixed gaze the countenance of the young Delaware. The latter bore the scrutiny with modest, yet undisturbed composure, and not a voice was raised in the council until the return of the messenger, conducting a Crow doctor or conjuror, somewhat advanced in years, who took his station by the chief, and gave a silent assent to the whispered orders that he received.

It may be well imagined with what feelings of surprise and indignation the haughty Osage beheld the young Delaware thus standing forward in the midst of the council-circle : that his presence boded no good to himself he well knew ; but how and wherefore he came, and why he, belonging as he did to a hostile band, was thus permitted to appear before the assembly of Crow warriors, he was quite at a loss to understand. His suspense, however, was not destined to be of long duration, for as soon as Besha, in obedience to a signal from the chief, had desired Wingenund to speak what he had to say, the youth came another step forward, and said, in a clear voice :

"There is a snake among the lodges of the Upsaroka ; a hidden snake, that will bite before its rattle is heard."

The Crows looked from one to the other as Besha translated this sentence, and the old conjuror gave a slight nod to the chief, indicating that the youth's meaning was rightly

given. [It may be as well to inform the reader that the said conjuror had in early life been taken prisoner by the Pawnees, with a party of whom he had been conveyed to a great council held with the Indian agents at St. Charles, in Missouri, respecting the cession and appropriation of territory. Several of the Western Delawares had been present at this meeting, which was protracted for many weeks, and the Crow prisoner had picked up a smattering of their tongue, which, however slight it might be, had occasioned him to be sent for on this occasion to check any propensity for untruth that might be entertained by the horse-dealer. Whether the latter was influenced by these, or by other motives, he rendered faithfully the conversation that ensued, and therefore it is not necessary to notice further the part played by the interpreter.]

"Who is it that speaks?" demanded the old chief, with dignity; "the Crows open not their ears to the idle words of strangers."

"Then let them shut their ears," returned the youth, boldly. "Before another sun has set they will wish they had listened to the words of Wingenund!"

"Who is Wingenund? Is he not an enemy? have not his people shed Upsaroka blood? why, then, should they believe his words?"

"Wingenund is the son of a Lenape chief. For a thousand summers his fathers have hunted over forest and plain beyond the Great River. Wingenund has heard of their deeds, and he will not stain his lips with a lie. The Lenape have taken Crow scalps in defense of their own, Wingenund will not deny it; but he came here to serve his white friends, not to hurt the Upsaroka."

On hearing this bold reply, White-Bull bent his brow fiercely upon the speaker; but the youth met his eye with a look of bright, untroubled confidence, while he quietly awaited the chief's further interrogation.

"Let the son of the Lenape speak, but let him beware—if his tongue is forked, the Upsaroka knives will cut it out from his head."

"Wingenund is not a woman, that he should be frightened with big words; when he speaks, the truth comes from

his lips ; and if he chooses to be silent, the Upsaroka knives can not make him speak," replied the youth, with a look of lofty scorn.

"Is it so?—we shall see," cried White-Bull, springing forward, at the same time drawing his knife, with which he struck full at the naked breast of the youth. Not a muscle moved in the form or countenance of Wingenund ; his eye remained steadily fixed on that of the Crow, and he did not even raise in his defense the arm over which his blanket was suspended. Nothing could have saved him from instant death, had not White-Bull himself arrested the blow just as it was falling, so that the point of the knife scratched, but did not penetrate the skin. Wingenund smiled, and the Crow warrior, partly ashamed of his own ebullition of temper, and partly in admiration of the cool courage of the young Delaware, said to his father : "Let him speak ; there are no lies upon his tongue."

The old man looked for a moment sternly at his son, as if he would have reproved him for his violence, in interrupting the business of the council, but apparently he thought it better to let it pass ; and, turning toward Wingenund, in a milder tone than he had yet used, "Let the young stranger speak if he will, his words will not be blown away ; if he has seen a snake, let him show it, and the chiefs of the Upsaroka will owe him a debt."

Thus appealed to, Wingenund, slowly raising the forefinger of his right hand, pointed it full upon Mahega, saying, in a loud voice, "There is the snake ! Fed by the band of the Upsaroka, clad in their gifts, warmed by their fire, he now tries to bite them, and give them over to their enemies, even as his black heart and forked tongue have before destroyed those whom he called brothers."

It is beyond the power of words to paint the rage of the conscious Osage on hearing this charge : he concealed it, however, by a strong effort, under a show of just indignation, exclaiming aloud, "The Upsaroka warriors are not fools, that they should believe the idle words of a stranger boy, a spy, who stole into their camp by night, and now tickles their ears with lies."

"The young Lenape must tell more," said the old chief,

gravely, "before the Upsaroka can believe bad things of warrior who has smoked and fought with them, and has taken the scalps of their enemies."

Thus called upon, Wingenund proceeded to relate distinctly the circumstances already narrated. His tale was so clearly told, his description of the locality so accurate, that the attention of the whole council was riveted, and they listened with the most profound attention.

Great was the excitement among the Crows as Wingenund described, with unerring minuteness and accuracy, the dress and equipments of the stranger with whom Mahega had held the interview: and there was dead silence in the council when the interpreter was ordered to inquire whether he knew to what tribe the strange Indian belonged.

"Wingenund knows not," he replied; "but he heard the name that was taught to the Osage, as the battle-cry of his new allies."

"*E-chi-peta!*" shouted the impetuous White-Bull, who had already recognized in the youth's description one of the warriors of the Black-feet, the hereditary enemies of his tribe.

"It was not so," replied Wingenund, gravely. "*Ka-in na** was the name; it was twice spoken."

A deep murmur ran round the assembly, White-Bull exchanged a significant glance with the nearest of his braves, and again a profound silence reigned throughout the assembly.

Mahega now felt that the crisis of his fate was at hand, and that every thing must depend on his being able to throw discredit on the tale of Wingenund. This was not, however, an easy task, for he suspected Besha of a secret leaning to the Delaware side, while the fierce and lowering looks of the bystanders showed him how little was wanting to make the smothered flame burst forth.

These indications did not escape the aged chief, who spoke

* The name by which the Black-feet are generally known among the Crows is "*Echipeta*." In their own tongue they call themselves "*Siksi-kaga*," both words having the signification of Black-feet. They are divided into three bands, the largest of which is called by the generic name above mentioned, as being that of the tribe; the other two bands are called "*Piegan*," or "*Piegan*," (the meaning of which word is not known to the author), and "*Ka-in-na*," or "*Bloody-men*," which last are held to be the most fierce and formidable of the three.

a few words in a serious and warning tone, the purport of which was to remind them that the present council was sacred to the Medicine, and was not to be desecrated by any violence or shedding of blood. He concluded by saying, "Let the Washashe speak for himself, and let Besha give his words truly, if he does not wish to have his ears cut off."

Thus admonished, the horse-dealer lent all his attention to the Osage, who came forward to address the council with an imposing dignity of manner that almost made the most suspicious of his hearers doubt the truth of the accusations brought against him.

Being now in front of the semicircle, which was not more than twenty yards in width, he was directly opposite to Wingenund, who stood forward a few feet in advance of its other wing. The contrast offered by the stature and bearing of the accuser and the accused, the slight, active frame, the youth and grace of the one, and the haughty air and gigantic bulk of the other, struck Ethelston so forcibly, that he could not forbear whispering to Paul Muller, "Worthy father, does not the scene recall to mind the meeting between the Hebrew shepherd and the giant of Gath?"

"It does, my son; and I misjudge the motives of the Osage, if they part hence without the shedding of blood. I have long studied his countenance, and however skillfully he has subdued its expression, I can trace the full storm of passion raging within his breast."

Further discourse was prevented by the commencement of the Osage's speech, which he delivered with a tone and gesture of indignation, suitable to one who declared himself injured and belied.

He began by recapitulating the services he had rendered to the Crows, the faithful warriors he had lost in their cause, and their valuable presents concealed in the *cache*, to which he was even now conducting them; on the other hand, he painted the injuries they had received from the Lenape, who had come into their country in league with the white-skins, the bane of their tribe and race, that their hands were still wet with Upsaroka blood; and "whose is the forked tongue," said he, "that is to cover with lies and dirt the fame of the great chief of the Washashe, the sworn brother of the Upsa-

roka?—Who but a boy, a stranger, a liar and a spy, telling his idle dreams to the council, to break the friendship of warriors whom his cowardly tribe, and their pale-face allies, dared not meet in the field !”

During the whole of this tirade, which was delivered with much vehemence and gesticulation, Wingenund stood motionless as a statue, his calm eye fixed upon the excited countenance of his opponent with an undisguised expression of contempt.

Receiving no reply, Mahega continued : “ Chiefs and brothers, you are wise in council—men of experience ; your ears will not be tickled with the idle songs of this false-tongued singing-bird ; a messenger who brings such news to the great council of the Upsaroka—who tells them that their brother, who has fought by their side, and smoked at their fire, is a forked snake, he must bring something better to convince them than the cunning words coming from his own lying lips.”

These words, supported by the commanding tone assumed by the Osage, were not without their effect upon the minds of that fierce and deeply-interested assemblage.

Wingenund waited until the speech of his antagonist had been translated to them, when he replied, with unmoved composure : “ If the Crow warriors require better witness than words, it is not difficult to find ; they have already been told that the Kainna stranger gave to Mahega a present of a bow and arrows, which he hid in the rocks ; Wingenund took them out, and here they are.”

As the youth spoke, he dropped the blanket that had been thrown over his left arm and shoulder, holding up to the council the bow and arrows, which all present instantly recognized as being made and ornamented by the Black-feet.

“ Are the warriors yet convinced ?” continued the youth raising his voice, “ or do they wish for more ? If they do, let them seize the Washashe wolf ; they will find in his belt—”

He was not allowed to finish his sentence ; the storm that had been so long brooding, now burst in all its fury. Mahega, driven to desperation by the damning evidence brought against him, and reckless of all save the gratification of his fierce revenge, whirled his iron-pointed mace around his head, and launched it with tremendous force at Wingenund.

Never had the latter, even for an instant, taken his falcon eye off the Osage ; but so swift was the motion with which the weapon was thrown, that although he sprung lightly aside to avoid it, the spiked head grazed and laid open his cheek, whence it glanced off, and striking an unlucky Crow who stood behind him, felled him, with a broken arm, to the ground. Even in the act of stooping to escape the mace, Wingenund fitted an arrow into the Black-foot bow which he held in his hand ; and rising quick as thought, let it fly at his gigantic adversary with so true an aim, that it pierced the windpipe, and the point came out at the back of his neck, close to the spine. While the Osage, half-strangled and paralyzed, tugged ineffectually at the fatal shaft, Wingenund leaped upon him with the bound of a tiger, and uttering aloud the war-cry of the Lenape, buried his knife in the heart of his foe. With one convulsive groan, the dying Osage fell heavily to the earth ; and ere the bystanders had recovered from their astonishment, his blood-stained scalp hung at the belt of the victorious Delaware.

For a moment all was tumult and confusion ; the few remaining Osages made a rush toward Wingenund to avenge the death of their chief, but they were instantly overpowered and secured with thongs of pliant bark, while White-Bull sprung into the arena of combat, and in a voice of thunder, shouted to his warriors to stand back and unstring their bows.

During the brief but decisive struggle, the appearance of Wingenund was so much changed, that Ethelston declared to his friend afterward that he should not have recognized him. The muscles of his active frame swelled with exertion, while the expanded nostrils and flashing eye gave to his countenance an expression of fierce excitement, almost amounting to ferocity. Now that the struggle was over, he resumed, without an effort, the habitual quiet gentleness of his demeanor, and turning to Besha, said : " Let the Upsaroka chiefs look below the belt of that dead wolf ; perhaps they will find the signal-whistle of the Kainna."

The horse-dealer stooped ; and searching as he was directed, found a small leathern bag, on opening which there fell out, as Wingenund had said, the whistle of the Black-foot

chief; a yell of indignation burst from the assembly, some of the nearest of whom vented their rage by bestowing sundry kicks on the inanimate remains of the treacherous Osage.

Popularity is a plant that springs up suddenly, and perishes as rapidly, among the tribes of the Western wilderness; and Wingenund, whose life would scarcely have been safe had he been found an hour earlier in the Crow camp, was now its hero and its idol. To say that the youth was not elated, would be to say that he was not human; for he had revenged the slaughter of his kindred, and had overcome the most powerful and renowned warrior in the Missouri plains, the fell destroyer of the race of Tamenund. But so well had he been trained in the school of self-command, that neither Ethelston, or Paul Muller, who had known him from childhood, could trace in his demeanor any thing different from his usual quiet modesty; and they waited, with no little impatience, to see what result would ensue from this triumph in respect to their own release.

The Crow chiefs and warriors did not forget, in the excitement of the scene just described, the threatened attack to which the treachery of Mahega had exposed them; and they now crowded around Wingenund, while White-Bull put many questions to him, through Besha, respecting the position and apparent numbers of the Black-feet, to all of which he answered with a precision that increased the high opinion that they already entertained of his quickness and intelligence. White-Bull even condescended so far as to explain to him his own projects for withdrawing his band from the neighborhood of the formidable Kainna to some more secure position. A slight smile curled the lip of the young Delaware, as he said to Besha: "The counsel of the Crow chief does not seem good to Wingenund: if White-Bull will agree to his terms, he will place the Kainna chief, and half a score of his best warriors, as captives in this camp before to-morrow at mid-day."

A general murmur of surprise followed these words; and White-Bull, somewhat nettled, inquired what might be the terms proposed.

"They are," said Wingenund, "first, that the two white

prisoners shall be immediately restored to their friends; secondly, that the Osages shall be given up to the Lenape; thirdly, that there shall be peace and friendship between the friends of Wingenund and the Upsaroka until the snow falls again upon the earth."

The leaders having conversed apart for a few minutes, White-Bull said: "If Wingenund fails, and the Kainna take many scalps from the Upsaroka, what will happen then?"

"They will take the scalp of Wingenund too," replied the youth, calmly.

Again the Crow chiefs consulted together for some time, and at length they resolved to agree to the terms proposed by Wingenund. The medicine-pipe was brought, and was passed from the chief to him, as well as to Ethelston and the missionary: after which Wingenund said to White-Bull: "There is no time to be lost; let sixty of the best warriors be chosen, twenty to go with Wingenund, and forty with White-Bull; and let one be found very large and tall; let him put on the dress of Mahega; Wingenund will take the whistle and all will be ready."

A short time sufficed to collect and marshal the party; and Ethelston was, at his own earnest request, permitted to join the band led by the Delaware youth, being anxious to see the maneuvers about to take place, and Besba having made himself responsible for his fidelity.

Wingenund led the way at a swift pace, until he gained the summit of the first range of hills; nor did he slacken it until he had crossed the valley beyond and stood upon the opposite brow of the heights whence the Black-foot band was visible. Here he concealed and halted his party, until he had crept forward and examined all the range of hills within sight. As soon as he had satisfied himself that all was quiet, he drew his party gently on, and at length succeeded in hiding White-Bull and his forty men behind some rocks in the steepest and narrowest part of the gorge leading down to the glen below. His quick eye had noted the spot before, and a more minute inspection now convinced him that there was no other pass by which the enemy could ascend the height, and that a handful of determined men might defend against ten times their number.

Having warned White-Bull to keep his own men close, and to stir neither hand nor foot until he heard the Lenape war-cry, which was the appointed signal, he retreated with his own band of twenty men to the point where the interview between Mahega and the Black-foot had taken place, which was about forty yards higher up the mountain, and where the gorge was almost as narrow and precipitous as at the pass below. Here he concealed his men among the rocks, and Ethelston primed and loaded three rifles which they had taken from the Osages, and which were now destined for the use of Wingenund and himself.

For several weary hours the youth watched in vain for the approach of the Black-feet; and any nerves less steady than his own would have been shaken by the remembrance of the disagreeable consequences that might result from the failure of his plot. He lay, however, still and motionless as the stone upon which his elbow rested, until, just as the gray hue of evening was beginning to steal over the landscape, he descried an Indian slowly ascending the steep, followed at a distance by a long line of warriors. A low whistle from Wingenund warned his party to be ready, but he moved not until the advancing band were sufficiently near for him to recognize in their leader the chief who had conferred with Mahega on the preceding day.

While they were approaching in careless security, the Crows prepared for an attack, each man being provided with a tough halter of bison hide, in addition to his usual weapons of bow, knife, and war-club; and the leader of the Black-feet had already passed the lower gorge (where White-Bull and his party were concealed), ere he sounded the signal preconcerted with Mahega. Wingenund immediately replied by a similar sound drawn from the whistle which he had secured, desiring at the same time the Crow who wore the dress of the slain Osage to show himself at the edge of the rock skirt-ing the pass. The Black-foot chief, completely deceived, toiled lazily up the steep and narrow ascent, beckoning to his men to follow; and just as he reached the upper station, Wingenund, seeing that twelve or fourteen of them were now fairly caged between the party below and his own, leaped from his concealment upon the astonished leader of the Black-

feet, and dealing him a blow on the head that stunned and disabled him, shouted aloud the war-cry of the Lenape.

No sooner was the signal uttered, than White-Bull rushed from his ambuscade, and seized the pass below; so that the unfortunate Black-feet, inclosed between the two parties, panic-struck by the suddenness of the attack, and the fall of their leader, could neither fight nor fly; and, in spite of their desperate but unavailing attempts at resistance, were all in the course of a few minutes disarmed and securely bound.

Meanwhile the main body of their comrades made a gallant attempt to force the lower pass, but it was so stoutly defended by the Crows, and it was in itself so narrow and difficult, that they were soon forced to retire with loss. Terrified by the suddenness of the attack, and ignorant of the number, position, and even of the nation of their unexpected assailants, and fearful that another maneuver might cut off their retreat, they fled precipitately down the mountain-side, and halted not until they brought their tale of disgrace and disaster into the Kainna camp.

Wingenund and White-Bull stood together before the lodge of the aged chief of the Crows, whom the former addressed as follows: "My father, see there the Kainna chief, and twelve of his best warriors; they are prisoners; their life hangs upon my father's breath; the promise of Wingenund ~~has~~ not been blown away by the wind."

CHAPTER IX.

THE LOST FOUND.

WINGENUND and his friends rode up to the camp of Reginald in triumph. The Crows had released the white prisoners, and given him the four Osage captives to do as he pleased with.

As the party drew near the camp, they fell in with the out-picket on guard in that quarter, consisting of one of the Delaware braves and two of his men, to whom Wingenund

intrusted his Osage prisoners, adding: "Give them water and food, but let them not escape."

The brave looked full in the face of the youth, then his eye roved from the scalp at his belt to the pinioned Osages, and a grim smile played across his features; but they almost instantly relapsed into the grave and gloomy expression that they had before worn; not another word was spoken, and the three passed on toward the white tent. As they drew near, they saw a group of hunters, among whom were Pierre and Bear-skin, sitting round a smoldering fire, some smoking, and others engaged in mending their moccasins or cleaning their pistols and rifles. There was neither joke nor song among them; and although they started up to welcome their rescued and returning friends, the latter perceived that something was wrong, and it was with aching and foreboding hearts that they returned the friendly greeting, and passed onward toward the tent, before which they saw Reginald and Baptiste in earnest conversation.

Reginald no sooner saw them, than he sprung forward to embrace Ethelston, exclaiming: "God be praised for this great and unexpected comfort!"

Ethelston looked in his friend's face; and its expression confirming his apprehensions, his lip grew pale and trembled; he gasped for breath, as, pressing Reginald's hand within his own, he said: "Speak—speak! tell me what has happened?" Then, pointing to the tent, he added: "Is she safe? is she well?"

"She is safe—she is well!" replied Reginald; "nevertheless—"

Ethelston heard no more, but a deep groan relieved the oppression of his heart, as he ejaculated: "Blessed be the God of Mercies!" and covering his face with his hands, stood for a moment in silence.

Reginald was surprised at this extraordinary emotion in his friend, usually so composed and calm, and the deep interest that he took in one whom, although betrothed to his intended brother-in-law, he had not yet seen. But he added, gravely: "God knows, my dear friend, that my gratitude is not less fervent than yours. Precious as her life is, it has, however, been ransomed at a price dearer to me than aught

else on earth beside herself. Wingenund," he continued, addressing the youth, and affectionately taking his hand, "you are the son of a race of heroes; is your heart firm? Are you prepared to suffer the griefs that the Great Spirit thinks fit to send?"

The youth raised his dark eyes to the speaker's face; and subduing by a powerful effort the prescient agony of his soul, he said, in a low tone: "Let Netis speak on; the ears of Wingenund are ready to hear what the Great Spirit has sent."

"Dear Wingenund, alas! War-Eagle, our beloved brother is—"

"Dead!" interrupted the youth, letting the butt of his rifle fall heavily to the ground.

"Nay, not yet dead, perhaps worse than dead; for he is hurt beyond all hope of cure, yet suffers torture such as none but himself could endure without complaint."

It was fearful for those who stood by to witness the agonizing struggle of emotions that convulsed the frame of the young Delaware on receiving this announcement; for War-Eagle had been to him not only a brother, but father, companion, and friend, the object on whom all the affection of his young heart had been concentrated with an intensity almost idolatrous; yet even in the extremity of anguish he forgot not the rude yet high philosophy of his race and nurture; he could not bear that any human eye should witness his weakness, or that any white man should be able to say that Wingenund, the last of the race of Tamenund, had succumbed to suffering. Terrible was the internal conflict; and while it was yet uncertain how it might end, his hand accidentally rested upon his belt and his fingers closed upon the scalp of Mahega; instantly, as if by magic, the grief of the loving brother was crushed by the stoic pride of the Indian warrior.

"War-Eagle is not dead; his eyes shall look upon the scalp of his great enemy slain by the hand which he first taught to use a bow; and when he goes to the hunting-fields of the brave, our fathers may ask him, 'Where is the scalp of the destroyer of our race?'" Such were the thoughts that shot like wildfire through the brain and through the

breast of the young Delaware, as, with a countenance almost haughty in its expression, he drew up his graceful form to its full height, saying, "Where is War-Eagle? Wingenund would see him. Let the Black Father go too; perhaps his healing skill might avail."

"I will not deceive you, dear Wingenund; no human skill can avail our departing friend. He is now within the tent; Forest-Bird watched with him all the night: she spoke to him often words from God's own book, and they seemed to comfort him, for he smiled, and said he would gladly hear more. She has retired to take a few hours' sleep, then she will return and resume her sad but endearing task."

"Wingenund will go to him; but first let Netis say whence the wounds of War-Eagle came. Have enemies been near the camp?"

With the eloquence of deep feeling, Reginald briefly related the circumstances attending War-Eagle's devoted and heroic defense of Forest-Bird from the bears.

Ethelston and Paul Muller listened with suspended breath, and as he concluded, exclaimed together, "Noble, brave, and generous War-Eagle!" while the youth, pressing his lips together as if steeling his breast against softer impressions, said, in a low tone, "'Twas well done; few are the warriors whose single knife has reached the heart of a grizzly bear. Let us go to the tent."

Reginald led the way, and, lifting the flap, entered, followed by Ethelston, Wingenund, and Paul Muller.

The chief was seated in the center, propped by bales of cloth, and fur; his sunken eye was closed from sleeplessness and exhaustion, and a blanket, loosely thrown over his shoulders, covered the emaciated remains of his once powerful and athletic frame. At his side lay his favorite pipe, his war club, knife, and rifle; while the faithful Lita, stretched at his feet, strove in vain to restore their natural warmth, by applying to them hot stones enveloped in the shreds of a blanket, which she had torn up for the purpose. The entrance of the party was not unmarked by the wounded chief, and a smile passed over his wasted features when he unclosed his eyes and recognized Wingenund and the two men whom he had rescued from the Crows.

"The Black Father is welcome," he said, in a faint, but cheerful voice, "and so is the friend of Netis; and War-Eagle is glad to see the face of his brother Wingenund."

We have seen how the youth had, by a desperate effort, nerved himself to bear, without giving way, the description of his brother's wounds and hopeless condition; yet when the feeble tones of that loved voice thrilled upon his ear, when his eye fell upon the wasted frame, and when he saw written upon that noble countenance proofs not to be mistaken, of torture endured, and death approaching, the string which had refused to be relaxed started asunder, and he fell senseless to the ground, while a stream of blood gushed from his mouth.

"Let the Black Father lend his aid and skill to the youth: he is the last leaf on the Unami branch; dear is his blood to the Lenape," said War-Eagle.

"Dearer to none than to me," said the missionary, raising and supporting the unconscious youth, "for to him I owe my liberty, perhaps my life. 'Tis only the rupture of a small blood-vessel; fear not for him, my brave friend, he will soon be better."

While Paul Muller, assisted by one of the Delawares who stood at the entrance of the tent, carried the youth into the open air, and employed the restoratives which his experience suggested, the chief mused upon the words which he had last heard, and inquired, addressing himself to Reginald, "What said the Black Father of his life and liberty being giving by Wingenund?"

"Tell the chief, Ethelston, what has befallen, and how you and Paul Muller were rescued by Wingenund. In my deep anxiety for my suffering friend, I was satisfied with seeing that you had returned in safety, and never inquired how you escaped."

Ethelston drew near to the wounded chief, so that he might distinctly hear every syllable spoken, and said, "War-Eagle, as surely as Forest-Bird owes her life and safety to your devoted courage, so surely do the Father and I owe our lives and liberty to that of Wingenund. Can you listen now, and follow me while I tell you all that has happened?"

The chief gave a silent nod of assent, and Ethelston pro-

ceeded in the simple language of true feeling to relate to him the events recorded in the last chapter. At the commencement of the narrative, the chief, expecting, probably, that the escape had been effected by some successful disguise or stratagem, closed his eyes, as if oppressed by the torturing pains that shot through his frame; but he opened them with awakened interest when the scene of the council was described, and at the mention of Mahega's name, he ejaculated, "Ha!"—his countenance assumed a fierce expression, and his hand unconsciously grasped the war-club that lay beside him.

Reginald listened with deep interest, and even Lita, who had hitherto appeared insensible to every thing except the sufferings of her beloved lord, threw back the long hair from her eyes, marveling what this might be that so excited and revived him; but when Ethelston related the catastrophe, how Mahega had thrown his club, slightly grazing the youth, and how the latter had, in the presence of the assembled Crows, killed and scalped the great Osage, the breast of the Delaware warrior heaved with proud emotions, which quelled for the moment all sense of the pains that racked his frame; his eye lightened with the fire of other days, and waving the war-club over his head, he shouted, for the last time, the war-cry of his tribe.

As the chief fell back exhausted upon his rude pillow, the gentle voice of Forest-Bird was heard from the adjoining compartment of the tent, calling Lita to explain the meaning of the loud and unexpected cry by which she had been aroused from her slumber. Lita withdrew; and while her mistress made her rapid and simple toilet, informed her of the safe return of the Black Father and Wingenund, and that the latter having been seized with a sudden illness, the friend of Reginald had remained by the chief, and had communicated some intelligence which seemed to affect him with a most extravagant joy and excitement.

So anxious was the maiden to see her beloved preceptor, and so hastily did she fold the kerchief in the form of a turban round her head, that several of her dark tresses escaped from beneath it, and fell over her neck. The first dress that came to her hand was one made from a deep-blue Mexican shawl, of ample dimensions, given to her by the missionary

Fastening this around her slender waist with an Indian girdle, and a pair of moccasins upon her delicate feet, she went forth, catching up as she left the tent a scarf, which she threw carelessly over her shoulders. Greeting War-Eagle hastily, but affectionately, as she passed, she flew with a glowing cheek and beating heart to the spot where the missionary still bent with affectionate solicitude over the reviving form of Wingenund.

"My father—my dear father!" she exclaimed, seizing his hand; "God be praised for thy safe return!"

The venerable man embraced her tenderly, and after contemplating for a moment her countenance beaming with filial affection, he placed his outspread hands upon her head, saying, with impressive solemnity, "May the blessing of God rest upon thee, my beloved child, and upon all near and dear to thee, forever."

Forest-Bird bowed her head meekly while breathing a silent amen to the holy man's benediction, and then turned to inquire of Paul Muller the cause of her young brother's sudden illness.

Wingenund was sufficiently recovered to speak to her gratefully in reply, and to press the hand which she held out to him; but he was much reduced by loss of blood, and the missionary, putting his finger to his lips, enjoined him quiet and silence for the present. He continued, however, in a low voice, to explain to her the strange events that had lately occurred, and how he and the friend of her betrothed owed to the heroism of Wingenund their life and liberty.

While the maiden listened with absorbed attention, every passage in the brief but eventful tale was legible on her eloquent countenance. As Reginald stood at a little distance gazing earnestly upon its changeful loveliness, he was startled by a suppressed ejaculation from some one at his side, at the same time that his arm was seized and pressed with almost convulsive force. He turned, and saw his friend Ethelston, who, finding that War-Eagle had fallen into a tranquil sleep, had stolen out of the tent to the side of Reginald, where he first caught sight of the maiden as she listened to the missionary's narrative. Reginald again observed with astonishment that his friend, usually so calm, trembled from head to foot:

his eye rested upon the group with a preternatural fixedness, and his lips moved inaudibly, like those of a man scarcely recovered from a trance. "Gracious Heaven! what can have happened? Edward, you are not surely ill! that would indeed fill the cup of our trials to the brim. Speak to me! let me hear your voice, for your looks alarm me!"

Ethelston made no reply, but he pointed with his finger toward Forest-Bird, and two or three large tear-drops rolled down his cheek.

While this was passing, Paul Muller had brought his tale to a conclusion, and his eye happening to light upon Ethelston, he continued (still addressing Forest-Bird): "And now, my dear child, it only remains for me to tell you the cause of our beloved young brother's weakened condition. The extremes of joy and of anguish will sometimes sweep before them the mightiest bulwarks that can be raised in the heart of man by his own unaided strength. Wingenund opposed to the stroke of affliction sent from on high not the meek, trusting endurance of Christian resignation, but the haughty resistance of human pride. Already he sees and repents his error, and the mist is clearing away from his eyes; but you, my dear child, have been better taught; you have learnt, in all trials and in all emergencies, to throw yourself upon the mercy of your heavenly Father, and to place your whole trust in his gracious promises of protection. We are more apt to forget this duty when our cup overflows with joy than when his chastening hand is upon us; but it should not be so. Promise me, then, promise me, my beloved child, that in weal or in woe, in the rapture of joy as in the extremity of sorrow, you will strive to remember and practice it."

Awed by the unusual solemnity of his manner, the maiden bowed her head, and said: "I promise."

Scarcely had she said these words, when Reginald came forward, leading his friend Ethelston, who had by a strong effort recovered from his extreme agitation, and regained something of his usual composure. "Forest-Bird," said Reginald, "I wish to make known to you my most faithful companion, my tried and attached friend, Ethelston. You must love him now for my sake; when you know him you will do so for his own."

Leaning on the missionary's arm, the maiden raised herself from her stooping posture to greet the friend of her betrothed. "I have heard much—" she said, with her sweet, natural dignity of manner; but she suddenly stopped, starting, as if she had seen a ghost, and clinging closer to Paul Muller's arm, while her earnest gaze encountered the eyes of Ethelston fixed upon her with an expression that seemed to shake the nerves and fibers of her heart. To Reginald their silence and agitation was an incomprehensible mystery; not so to the missionary, who still supported Forest-Bird, and whispered to her, as she advanced a step nearer to the stranger: "Your promise." She understood him, for he heard her breathe the Almighty's name, as Ethelston also advanced a step toward her; and again their looks dwelt upon each other with a fixed intensity that spoke of thoughts too crowded, and confused, and mysterious, for expression. At length Ethelston, whose strong and well-balanced mind had triumphed over the first shock of emotion, addressed the maiden, saying: "Have the latter years been so happily spent that they have quite banished from the mind of Forest-Bird the memory of early days?"

At the sound of his voice the maiden started, as if she had received an electric shock; her bosom heaved with agitation, and her eyes filled with tears.

Again the missionary whispered: "Your promise!" while Ethelston continued: "Has she forgotten her own little garden with the sun-dial? and poor Mary, who nursed, and dressed, and taught her to read? Has she forgotten the great Bible full of prints, of which she was so fond: and the green lane that led to Mooshanne? Has Evy forgotten her Edward?"

"'Tis he—'tis he! 'tis Eddy! my own, my long-lost brother!" cried the maiden aloud, as she threw herself into his arms; and looking up into his face, she felt his cheek as if to assure herself that all was not a dream, and poured out her grateful heart in tears upon his bosom. She did remember her promise, and even in the first tumult of her happiness, she sought and derived from him, to whom she owed it, strength to endure its sudden and overwhelming excess.

"'Tis even so," said the missionary, grasping the astonish-

ed Reginald's arm ; " for some time I had suspected that such was the case ; Forest-Bird, my beloved pupil, and your betrothed bride, is no other than Evelyn Ethelston, the sister of your friend. My suspicions were confirmed and almost reduced to certainty, during the first conversations I held with him in St. Louis ; for he, being several years older than you, remembered many of the circumstances attending the disappearance and supposed destruction of his little sister by the Indians, when his father's house was ravaged and burned. I foresaw that they must meet when he left the settlements in search of you, and though I prepared him for the interview, I thought it better to say nothing to her or you, but to leave the recognition to the powerful voice of Nature. You see the result in that fraternal embrace, and I have in a little bag given to me by Tamenund when at the point of death, proofs of her identity that would convince a skeptic, were you disposed to be one—the cover of a child's spelling-book, in which her name is written at length (possibly by Ethelston), and a little kerchief, with the initials E. E. in the corner, both of which were in her hand when she was carried off by the Indian who spared and preserved her.

" Well do I remember," Reginald exclaimed, " missing my sweet little playmate in childhood ; and how all allusion to the terrible calamity that befell our nearest neighbor and friend were forbid in our family ! Scarcely ever, even in later years, have I touched upon the subject with Ethelston, for I saw that it gave him pain, and brought a cloud over his brow. Now, I can understand the wild and troubled expression that came across her countenance, when she first saw me near the Osage camp, and first heard my voice, and how she started, and afterward recovered herself, when I told her of Mooshanne !"

CHAPTER X.

THE DEATH OF WAR-EAGLE.

A MELANCHOLY party was gathered in the white tent of Forest-Bird around the couch of the dying Delaware chief. The more acute pain of his wounds had departed, but mortification had set in, and it was evident that War-Eagle had not long to live. Forest-Bird knelt beside him, ready to give him the cooling draught to which he from time to time had recourse to cool his lips and recruit his ebbing strength.

The whole party being gathered around him, Wingenund, Reginald and Ethelston somewhat in advance of the rest, he addressed the former in a low but distinct voice, saying : " War-Eagle is going on the dark path, from which he will never return : Wingenund will be chief of the Lenape band ; has he any thing to say, while War-Eagle is yet chief ? "

" He has, my brother. Here are the four Osage captives, taken among the Upsaroka. Their deeds of blood are known to War-Eagle ; let him say what shall be done with them. "

" Let them stand forward, " said the chief, raising himself with difficulty from the blanket cushion against which he had been reclining.

They were accordingly brought to the front of the circle, and stood awaiting their doom with the fierce, determined air of warriors who knew and feared it not.

" Have the Washashe any thing to say that their lives should not be given to the slow fire ? " War-Eagle asked.

The Osage made no reply. The missionary interchanged a whispered word with Forest-Bird, and the chief continued, addressing chiefly the Delawares in their own language : " My brothers, we often pray to the Great Spirit to forgive what we have done that is wrong. The Black Father and Olitipa have told War-Eagle the answer that he gives ; it is written in the great Book, in which there are no lies : ' The Great Spirit will forgive us if we forgive our brother ; if we refuse to forgive our brother, the Great Spirit will refuse to forgive

War-Eagle has done many things wrong; he hopes the Great Spirit will forgive him. Shall he now kill the Was-hashe?" He then turned to the prisoners, and said; "Let their bands be cut, and let them return to their own people to tell them that the Lenape hurt not women nor children, nor men whose hands are tied. Olitipa has read from the Book that such is the will of the Great Spirit, whom the white men call by the name of God, and the heart of War-Eagle tells him that it is true."

Wingenund was sitting upon the ground, close to his brother, listening with the deepest attention to the injunctions and counsel which the latter was delivering, in a voice that became every moment more feeble and indistinct. None present could overhear what passed; but at the conclusion the two brothers sat for a few seconds in silence, each pressing his clenched hand upon the heart of the other, after which Wingenund retired a few paces back, while the chief, collecting his remaining strength, said aloud to his devoted followers: "War-Eagle is going to the land where his fathers dwell; he is sorry to leave his brothers, but it is the will of the Great Spirit, who is the Master of Life; and when he speaks the Lenape are silent, and obey. When War-Eagle is gone, it is his wish that Wingenund should be chief of the band: the blood of Tamenund warms his heart; and though he has not seen many summers, his eyes have not been shut, nor have his ears been closed against the counsel of wise men. My brothers, you have the care of a great treasure—the care of Olitipa, the beloved daughter of Tamenund, the sister who has cleared away the cloud that hid the sun from War-Eagle, and the thorns that beset his path in the dark valley. My brothers, let not one of you leave her until she is safe at the white man's boundary; and if you love War-Eagle, you will also love and obey Wingenund, and Netis his adopted brother."

A deep, suppressed murmur was the only reply made by the gloomy warriors around; but War-Eagle knew its import, and read its confirmation on the determined countenances of those who had so often followed him to strife and victory.

The mortal agony was at hand, and the chief, feeling its approach, looked suddenly round as if he missed some one

who should be there ; his utterance was scarcely articulate, but Forest-Bird caught the intended sound of Lita's name, and flying into the tent, speedily returned, bringing with her the weeping girl. Again he contrived to make Forest-Bird understand his wish, that an armlet of beads that he wore should be taken off and hung round Lita's neck ; the chief smiled and said, " Lita has been faithful to Olitipa, and very good to War-Eagle ; the Great Spirit will reward her."

The destroyer was now rapidly tightening his fell coils round the vital organs, but the chief still retained sufficient strength to press the hand of each of his sorrowing friends in succession against that generous heart which must soon cease to beat. Wingenund was the last ; and as he stooped over his brother, whispered to him a word that reached the ear of Forest-Bird ; and while it richly rewarded her pious and affectionate toil, lighted up at the same time the countenance of the dying man with a smile of triumph that bid defiance to the pangs of the grisly king of terrors. From the time that he received his fatal wounds, not a groan nor a murmur of complaint had escaped him ; and when he resigned his parting breath, it was with the peaceful tranquillity of childhood falling asleep.

" My children," said the missionary, solemnly, " War-Eagle, the son of Tamenund is no more ! In life none walked more uprightly than he, according to the light that was given to him ! He gave up his life to save that of another, and after enduring grievous pains with the heroism of an Indian warrior, he died with a full hope and trust in the redeeming mercy of his God. Peace be with his soul ; and may we all rejoin him hereafter in the land where separation and sorrow will be unknown !"

SUPPLEMENTARY CHAPTER.

Supposing the reader to have taken sufficient interest in Forest-Bird to be desirous of learning something of the after-fortunes of those connected with her, we subjoin a letter which accidentally came into our possession, and which appears to have been written a few years subsequent to the date of the conclusion of the preceding tale.

“*St. Louis, June 12th, 18—.*”

“DEAR ETHELSTON—I have just returned from my long-promised visit to Wingenund, whose village is situated, as you know, not far from the southern banks of the Missouri, about one hundred miles beyond St. Charles’s. I found there our respected and venerable friend Paul Muller, whose intercourse with Wingenund and his band has been for some years almost uninterrupted, and productive of the most striking improvement, both in the village itself and in the character and manners of its inhabitants. Several small settlements of Delawares are in the neighborhood, all of whom acknowledge Wingenund as their chief; and most of them have availed themselves, more or less, of the teaching of the exemplary missionary.

“The village is situated on the side of a hill, gently sloping to the south, along the base of which flows a considerable stream, which, after watering the valley below, falls into the Missouri at the distance of a few miles. The huts or cottages occupied by the Delawares are built chiefly of wood; and each having a garden attached to it, they present a very neat and comfortable appearance. That of Wingenund is larger than the rest, having on one side a compartment reserved entirely for the use of the missionary; and on the other a large, oblong room, in which are held their devotional meetings; the latter serves also the purpose of a school-room for the education of the children. You would be surprised at the progress made by them, and by many of the adults, in reading, as well as in agriculture and other useful craft; and I must own, that when my eye fell upon their plows, hammers, saws, chisels, and other utensils, and then rested on the Bibles, a copy of which is in every dwelling, I felt a deep and gratifying conviction that our annual present to Wingenund has been productive of blessings quite beyond our expectations.

“I need scarcely tell you that his reception of me was that of a man welcoming a long-absent brother. He fell on my

neck, and held me for some time embraced without speaking ; and when he inquired about his dear sister Olitipa, his voice resumed the soft and almost feminine tones that I formerly noticed in it, when he was under the influence of strong emotion. In outward appearance he is much changed since you last saw him, having grown both in breadth and height ; indeed, I am **not** sure whether he is not now almost as fine a specimen of his race as was his noble brother, whom I can never mention or think of without a sigh of affectionate regret. Yet, in his ordinary bearing, it is evident that Wingenund, from his peaceful habits and avocations, has lost something of that free and fearless air that distinguished his warrior brother. I have learnt, however, from Baptiste (who, as you know, insisted upon accompanying me on this expedition), that the fire of former days is subdued, not extinguished within him, as you will perceive from the following anecdote, picked up by our friend the guide from some of his old acquaintance in the village.

"It appears that last autumn a band of Indians, who had given up their lands somewhere near the head-waters of the Illinois river, and were moving westward for a wider range and better hunting-ground, passed through this district ; and seeing the peaceful habits and occupations of the Delawares settled hereabouts, thought that they might be injured and plundered with impunity. They accordingly came one night to a small settlement only a few miles from here, and carried off a few score of horses and cattle, burning at the same time the dwelling of one of the young Delawares, and killing a young man who attempted to defend his father's property. A messenger having brought this intelligence to Wingenund, he collected a score of his most trusty followers, and taking care that they were well armed, went upon the trail of the marauders. He soon came up with them ; and their numbers being more than double his own, they haughtily refused all parley and redress, telling him, that if he did not withdraw his band, they would destroy it, as they had destroyed the young Delaware and his home on the preceding night.

"This insolent speech, uttered by the leader of the party, a powerful and athletic Indian, aroused the indignation of Wingenund ; his eyes flashed fire, and his followers saw that the warrior-spirit of his early days was rekindled within him. Ordering them to unsling and level their rifles, but not to fire until he give the word, he drew near to the leader of the party, and, in a stern voice, desired him to restore the plunder, and gave up the murderer of the Delaware youth. The reply was a shout of defiance ; and a blow leveled at his head, which he parried with his rifle, and, with a heavy stroke from its butt, leveled his antagonist on the ground ; then, swift as a

panther's spring, he leaped upon the fallen Indian's chest, and held a dagger to his throat.

"Panic-struck by the discomfiture of their leader, and by the resolute and determined attitude of the Delawares, the marauders entreated that his life might be spared, promising to give all the redress required; and on the same day Wingenund returned to his village, bringing with him the recovered horses and cattle, and the Indian charged with the murder, whom he would not allow to be punished according to the Delaware notions of retributive justice, but sent him to be tried at a circuit court then sitting near St. Charles's. This exploit has completely established our young friend's authority among his people, some of whom were, if the truth must be told, rather disposed to despise the peaceful occupations that he encouraged, and even to hint that his intercourse with the missionary had quenched all manly spirit within him. You will be surprised to hear that he has married Lita, who was for a while so deeply attached to his brother. Even had she been the wife of the latter, this would have been as conformable to Indian as to ancient Jewish usage. She now speaks English intelligibly, and asked me a thousand questions about Forest-Bird. Fortunately she had chosen a subject of which I could never weary; and I willingly replied to all her inquiries; when I told her that her former mistress and favorite had now three little ones, the elder of whom was able to run about from morning till night, and the youngest named Wingenund, after her husband, tears of joy and of awakened remembrance started in her eyes.

"I understood her silent emotion, and loved her for it. How changed is her countenance from the expression it wore when I first saw it! Then it was at one moment wild and sad, like that of a captive pining for freedom; at the next, dark and piercing, like that of the daughter of some haughty chief. Now you may read upon her face the gentle feelings of the placid and contented wife.

"When I left the village, Wingenund accompanied me for many miles; twice he stopped to take leave of me, when some still unsatisfied inquiry respecting your Lucy or Forest-Bird rose to his lips, and again he moved on. I can scarcely remember that he uttered any distinct profession of his affection for any of us, and yet I saw that his heart was full; and what a heart it is, dear Edward; fear and falsehood, and self, are all alike strangers there! When at length we parted, he pressed me in silence against his breast, wrung the hand of Baptiste, and turned away with so rapid a stride, that one who knew him not would have thought we had parted in anger.

"On reaching the summit of a hill whence I could command a view of the track that I had followed, I unslung my telescope, and carefully surveying the prairie to the westward, I

could distinguish, at a distance of several miles, Wingenund seated under a stunted oak with his face buried in his hands, and in an attitude of deep dejection. I could scarcely repress a rising tear, for that youth has inherited all the affection that I felt for him to whom I owe my Evelyn's life!

"Perrot has found so many 'compatriots' here, that he chatters from morning till night; and his wonderful adventures, by 'flood and field,' both in Europe and the Western Prairies, have rendered him at once the lion and the oracle of the tavern at which we lodge.

"Distribute for me, with impartial justice, a thousand loves among the dear ones in our family circle, and tell Evy that I shall not write again, as I propose to follow my letter in the course of a few days.

"Now and ever your affectionate brother,

"REGINALD BRANDON."

THE END.

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